

# SERMONS

PREACH'D at the

Cathedral-Church

OF

WINCHESTER.

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BY

ABRAHAM MARKLAND, D.D.

Late PREBENDARY of the said Church,  
and MASTER of *St. Cross*.

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SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE

Cathedral Church

OF



*Joseph Tasker,*  
*Middleton Hall, Essex.*





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# SERMON I.

## ECCLES. I. 2.

*Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher; Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.*



**I**T is a strange and wond'rous Passage, which *Enagrius Scholasticus* relates in the Fourth Book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, "That *Gelimor King* of the *Vandals*, taken Prisoner by *Belisarius*, and led in Triumph to *Constantinople*, and presented to *Justinian* sitting on his Throne; without begging his Grace or Favour, or taking notice of the Emperor, he threw himself down on the Ground, and only broke out into this Expression, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*". A Sentence, indeed, well  
V • L; II: B becom-



becoming a Prince on the Ground, who was a Captive; and yet might have become that Prince too, who sat on the Throne, and was a Conqueror. It was spoken at first by a much Wiser, and a Happier Prince than either, who never knew Trouble or Affliction; who lived in such Prosperity all his Days, in such Glory, that his whole Reign was a Triumph: And yet even this *Solomon*, who here styles himself *the Preacher*, and glories in the Title no less than in That of King of *Israel*, declares and repeats it with vehement Exaggeration, as the Sum of all his Labour, of his long Observation, his sad and woful Experience, *Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities; all is Vanity.*

BEFORE I enter upon the Discourse, or perhaps the several Discourses I may have on this Subject, give me leave to make one Reflection: That notwithstanding King *Solomon*, so wise and excellent a Preacher, and a thousand wise Men that were no Preachers, have all confess'd the same thing, and made the same Declaration, That all this World is nothing but Vanity; yet who (as the Prophet speaks) *bath believed their Report?* Though we have the Word of a King, and of the wisest Philosopher; though we have the Word of all Priests,

# S E R M O N I. 3

Priests, and the Word of all the Prophets that have been since the World began, that this World is but Vanity, yet who almost will be persuaded? Every one is trying still, and every one making the Experiment; and to no End or Purpose, but only to see their Folly, and advise others to be wiser; and to see their Advice again as little believ'd or regarded. Tho' several Kings and Emperors have been so weary of the Trouble, as to lay down their Crowns and Scepters, yet others have been as ready to take 'em up again, dazzled and deceiv'd with their Shew and Lustre; till having worn 'em awhile, they found they were all counterfeit, and the falsest Jewels in the World were those upon Crowns and Scepters. And not only Crown'd, but Triple-crown'd Heads too have made the same Confession. That famous Saying of *Urban* the Fourth, That no Man could be more unfortunate than to be made Pope, was by one of his Successors, *Adrian* the Sixth, thought so true, that he chose it for his Epitaph, and would have it written on his Tomb, *Here lies Adrian the Sixth, who esteem'd it the greatest Misfortune that ever befell him in all his Life-time, that he came to the Papacy.* And yet so far is the World from believing the Pope to be infallible, either in his Chair,

or on his Death-bed, that never were such Intrigues, and such Contests in this World, as for the gaining that Honour, nor the Pardon of their Sins so great an Occasion of a Jubilee; nay, what Intrigues, and what Contests even for the less Dignities? And upon a Vacancy of Cardinals, more striving, and more rejoycing to get into their Places, than to fill up the Seats of the fallen Angels. And as in Honour, so in Pleasures; tho' such as have tasted of them plentifully have (even before they have lost their Taste) declar'd the best to be insipid, and the worst all Gall and Wormwood; yet foolish Men are still adventuring, and to no End or Purpose again, but having seen their own Folly, to wish they had been persuaded by those who advis'd 'em better; and then to advise others, and to their Grief and Vexation to see their Advice again as little believ'd or regarded. This is indeed the Folly of Fools, Infatuation or Stupidity; a Round or Circle of Vanity, and no End or getting out of the Circle. We do not act so in other Cases: Should all Men that had ever travell'd through such a Country assure us it was infested with Thieves and Robbers, that used all People they met with most cruelly and barbarously, bound, gagg'd, and stripp'd 'em, and left 'em half  
dead

# S E R M O N I 5

dead and naked, and expiring even with Shame, no less than with Pain, Grief, and Sorrow; that they rifled and robb'd 'em all of every thing that was valuable, and many they slew and murder'd, that the Country was strew'd all over with Limbs of poor Travellers; and to convince us yet farther of the Truth of their Relation, should shew us their own Wounds, and many of 'em yet fresh and bleeding, and some, tho' with much Care, pretty well heal'd and recover'd, yet often very painful, and smarting most grievously; and tho' they hoped they were not mortal, yet they fear'd that they should carry the Marks and the Scars to the Grave with them in Sorrow; After such a sad Account of things, we must either be very incredulous, or very fond of travelling, and seeing a strange Country, to run into so many Dangers only to satisfy our Curiosity. And yet this is the State of the Case; and all who have ever yet experienc'd the Vanity of this World, do give us the same Relation, and tell us the same dismal Stories of their own and others Misadventures: That (as *Solomon* speaks of the strange Woman) *many have been cast down and wounded, and many slain in the Streets; and many strong, and many wise Men have been taken in the Snare; that the*



## 6 SERMON I.

*Way leads to Hell, and goes down to the Chambers of Death; and few, very few, were ever known to have return'd.*

The Reason of this strange Folly (if there be Reason in Folly) is one of these Opinions; That either Men think it want of Courage, and that it would argue them of Fear, and shew a poor and a mean Spirit, not to venture as far as others have done; or else a fond Conceit, that though others have miscarry'd, and thousands have been disappointed, yet they shall manage the Business so wisely that they shall succeed, and that they alone shall be happy. This is the Vanity of all Vanities, that every one should think himself to be the wisest Man in the World, or hope to be the only Fortunate: So others thought too, and found their Error. But if we will not be content to be Hearers and Believers, we shall come to be Teachers and Preachers of this Doctrine, shall take up this Saying or Proverb against ourselves, and declare with *Solomon*, not only from Experience, but with Sighs and Tears, with Sorrow and Repentance, *Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities; all is Vanity!*

THERE is one thing more I shall add by way of General Preface, and can here  
but

# S E R M O N I. 7

but just mention it, for it will take up a full Discourse, and that is this: That when *Solomon* says *all things are Vanity*, Riches, and Pleasures, and Learning, and Knowledge, and Honour, and Reputation, he means it of the things themselves only, and as abstracted from Religion; for that indeed makes every thing a Comfort and a Blessing: But so it does the Contraries, not only Riches and Honour, but Poverty and Disgrace; and a pious Man is happy in all Estates and Conditions. This being just premised, I proceed to the Words of *Solomon*, which he lays down here as his Text, or general Proposition; and the whole following Book is a Discourse on them, or a Sermon; where, in short, by several Arguments, and in all manner of Instances, these Words are plainly a general Proposition, and the whole following Book, a Treatise, or a Sermon, in which the Preacher shews the Vanity of all worldly Happiness: And the first Argument he uses, is of as general Extent and universal Influence, and includes every Particular, and that is the Instability of these things, their transitory Nature or Condition. And this one grievous Reflection is enough to destroy any Happiness; and the greater the Happiness, the more grievous the Reflection.

The very Fear or Suspicion of it were enough to allay and damp all the Joys of Heaven, but the Certainty or Necessity would fill that happy Place with Sighs and Lamentations; nor could they enjoy their Bliss a moment longer, could they think that e're long, or that ever, it shou'd have a Period. And yet this, he observes, is the fix'd and unalterable, the necessary Condition of all earthly Felicity: For in the Verse just after the Text, having made this Enquiry, or ask'd the Question, *What Profit hath a Man of all the Labour which he taketh under the Sun?* in the Verse immediately following he answers the Question, or resolves the Enquiry, with this sad, melancholy, and mortifying Observation, *One Generation passeth away, and another Generation cometh.* What Profit then hath a Man, or what have all Men living, all that now live on the Earth, a whole Age of Men, or Generation, since they all pass away as one Man, and the Earth is inhabited by another Generation?

IN speaking to this general Argument, tho' very large and comprehensive, yet that I may not prevent, or interfere with other Notions that I've scatter'd in this Book of *Solomon*, I shall confine the present Discourse to these two Considerations.

I. T H E

I. T H E Change or Succession of Men or Persons.

II. A N D, with them, the Change of Thoughts, of Designs, and Opinions.

A N D from both deduce some useful and practical Inferences.

FIRST, The Change of Men or Persons. For tho', as *Solomon* here observes, *the Earth still remains and abides the same continually*, yet it changes Inhabitants, it is changing 'em every Day, and in an Age has all new Lords, and new Possessors. The Thrones of the Earth have been filled with other Kings and Princes; and they too shook the Nations, and made the Earth itself tremble: But to Earth are they return'd, and to Dust are they resolv'd; nor can all the World now distinguish the Ashes of Kings or Princes from those of the meanest Peasants; and many of 'em might with too they might never be distinguish'd. And as in Thrones and Palaces, so in Camps and Pavilions; the Fields of War have been cover'd with other Armies, and the Face of it overspread with vast Hosts and Legions, and led on by as great Generals; and they too  
shook



shook the Nations, and made the Earth beneath 'em tremble; yet thither are they retir'd, to their poor narrow Tents, to their close and dark Pavilions; and no more Sign of their Armies, than of a Bird that flies through the Air, and parts it with the Stroke of her Wings; or of one of their own Arrows that shot thro' it, falls to the Ground, and the Air comes together again. And as in Courts and Camps, so is it seen in Towns and Cities; and the Places of Trade and Commerce, and the Seats of Law and Judicature, have been all crowded with other People; and they too were full of Business, and thought themselves (and were too) as wise in their Generation, and made as great a Noise and Shew: but the Noise and the Shew is over, and they who made it, as unknown as if they had never been, and quite forgotten.

AND to Courts, and Camps, and Cities, (tho' they all help to fill these Places) yet give me leave to add these Places too in which we are now assembled: There have been others here before us, and before them too other Assemblies; and they too made just such another Appearance; others have sat all around with the same Attention and Devotion; a great many others

# S E R M O N I. 11

others have spoke from this Place with more Learning and more Eloquence; have been caught up to Heaven with divine and holy Extasies, and taken their Hearers up with them too with Delight and Admiration; yet are gone down to the Grave in Silence, and the numerous Congregations all dismiss'd and departed.

AND now we are here, the Churches and the Cities, the Camps and the Courts, are the present Generations. The Thrones of the World are now possess'd by other Monarchs; and some rule with Scepters, the mild Ensign of Authority; and some with Rods of Iron, and (like the sacred Wand of *Moses* transform'd to a Serpent) turn the Blessing of Government, the Gift of Heaven to Mankind, into a Scourge and a Torment: And yet must their Swords and Scepters drop from their Hands, and their Crowns from their Heads, and themselves too be gather'd, not only to their Fathers, but even to their poor Subjects.

AND those numerous Camps that are now crowded with Armies will soon be remov'd, and all spoil'd and left empty; and of those vast Multitudes, not one of them appearing; none of 'em to be seen,  
from

from one End of the Field to the other; and the numerous Inhabitants of populous Cities are all hast'ning away from their Habitations, and going to the Grave, and their Houses and Dwelling-places *shall know 'em no more.*

AND we who are here too, are all on our Departure, and leaving our Seats, and resigning our Stations to others; and this Place too *shall know us no more.* And thus, as the Wise Man adds in the Verses immediately following this general Observation, *The Sun ariseth, and the Sun goeth down, and hasteth to the Place whence he arose; and the Winds whirl about, and return in their Circuits; and all the Rivers run into the Sea, and to the Place whence they came they do return all again:* Yet it is not so with Men; they set, and rise not till the Heavens are no more; they are a Wind that passeth away, and cometh not again; they are as the Rivers that run into the Sea, but till the Sea give up her Dead, shall never return.

I SHALL sum up this Particular with a Passage to this Purpose out of a learned Jesuit; for there have been learned Men of that Society before they were Politicians. He resembles the World to a great Stage

# S E R M O N I. 13

Stage or Theatre, in which, he says, is acted a perpetual Scene of Vanity; and then he reckons up the Persons, *Personæ Comicæ atq; Tragicæ, sunt Imperatores, Reges & Nobiles, &c.* The Persons, says he, are Emperors and Kings, Statesmen and Generals; Nobles and Counsellors, Citizens and Soldiers, rich Men and poor, Widows and Orphans, the Lovers, and the Despisers of this World, and of the other. Thus far that Author. Tho' he has forgotten, or omitted some of the chief Actors, Monks, Priests, and Jesuits, unless he reckon'd them (which no body else ever reckon'd) among the Despisers of this World, and of all worldly Vanity. However, as great as the Stage is, and as numerous the Persons, they all go off, and others enter, and new Persons appear, and a new Face of Affairs, and a new Scene of Actions.

WHICH brings me to the other Particular,

II. THE Change of Thoughts and Opinions, of Projects and Designs, and even of Principles and Practices, whether for the better or the worse, is more than we can determine; or if we should, would the World abide by our Determination?

They



They will all be their own Judges, and every Age will think itself as wise as those before 'em, or as any that shall come after; and therefore I shall only mention some few Instances of most moment, (for all of 'em were innumerable) and enquire into the Reasons of this strange and wonderful Difference and Alteration of Mens Judgments and Opinions.

AND this is most apparent in all human Compositions; not only the more fanciful, and the Products of pure Invention, but even in Discourses of Reason, or Argumentation. For tho' we are apt to say, that Reason is the same in all Ages, yet either it has several Shapes and Appearances, or the World has been often persuaded, (or we think so at least) and govern'd with little Reason. Not to run too far into Antiquity: How long has that one poor Argument of a visible Church supported the Church of *Rome*? And in the Confusions of *Christendom*, how many has it betray'd? and to this very Day, how many does it seduce? And yet too, it is plain (and as visible as the Church itself) that one Orthodox Bishop, with his single Congregation, are as good a Church as the whole Church of *Rome*, and a great deal better Christians.

BUT

BUT to come nearer, and to instance in things within some of our own Memories. How many Notions and Opinions have we seen in great Reputation asserted, maintain'd, extoll'd and admir'd, hardly question'd or disputed? And yet have the very same Notions sunk again, and lost their Esteem and Reputation; whether justly or unjustly I am not now enquiring, but only shewing the Mutability of Mens Thoughts and Opinions. Some indeed may retain perhaps, and adhere to their Opinions, and think it standing to Principles; and others may think it to be only Pride and Obstinacy, and not so much their Judgment, as their Shame of retracting. How many excellent Authors, in their Time at least excellent, and famous in their Generation, and Men of Renown, that carry'd the World after 'em, were magnify'd, ador'd, had the Titles of Divine, Angelic, and Seraphic; and yet in a few Ages have lost their great Titles, lay in close and dark Corners, themselves hardly buried in greater Obscurity? And as safe too as we imagine ourselves of the present Generation, and as secure of endless Honour, yet we know not what Posterity may think of us, or whether it will think of us at all: The most celebrated

brated Names forgotten, and they who now fill all Mens Mouths may never be mention'd. We think this perhaps impossible; but that is only our fond Opinion; *vixere Fortes ante Agamemnona*, there were valiant Men before *Agamemnon*; and I shall add, there were wise Men too before *Ulysses*.

BUT this is a Subject a little too tender, and perhaps a little too invidious to insist much upon it; and therefore I shall hasten to enquire into the Reasons of this strange Alteration of Mens Notions and Opinions. And these I think may be most, if not all of them, reduced to Pride and Vanity, or to Levity and Inconstancy.

A GREAT Reason of one Age's differing from another in their Thoughts and Designs, and in their Principles and Practices, is often Pride and Vanity; one Age will seldom endure to follow the Track of another, especially of the Age immediately preceding: It looks as tho' they were still under their Parents and Governors, and were not yet come to Years of Discretion. Men take more Pride in being thought wiser than their Fathers, than either their Grandfathers or

Great-Grandfathers ; these are remember'd, but those are forgotten. But whether wiser or no, there is in all Men since *Adam*, a little Tincture of Rebellion, and a Taint of Disobedience, a Scorn of any thing that looks like Subjection ; a Desire of Freedom, and an Affectation of Liberty ; they expect to be left to their own Understandings, and not be guided by others ; not to go on in a Road that is common and beaten, and has been trodden these hundred Years, and almost worn out again ; and therefore are for some new Way. When perhaps, they may be mistaken, and what they think is new, is as old, or much older ; was found out long ago, and was found to be ineffectual, not only a false, but an ill Way, and was long since deserted : But by Time, and Disuse, and Neglect, all over-grown, it looks new to them, and that satisfies their Vanity, and gratifies their Pride ; or were there nothing more in it, the little Spirit of Contradiction, a Spirit from which, few Men are free, and some it possesses. 'Tis to this Pride and Vanity, this fond Self-conceit, to which we owe, if not all, yet the most Errors in Religion. Men love to start something that is strange and surprizing, to raise others Wonder, and their own Reputation ; and to say what hath been said a



stand Times over, they think will never do it; and so despise receiv'd Notions, and plain common Opinions, search farther and deeper, and make new Discoveries; when yet the World has found after their deep Searches and Enquiries, they have discover'd nothing at all, but their own Pride and Vanity.

AND as one Age often differs in their Opinions from another, out of Pride and Vanity, so it differs too as often, out of Levity and Inconstancy. Were the World at any time in the right, yet it would not be so long: Truth itself is not so pleasing or delightful to human Nature, as Change and Variety: It is weary of any Thing, of every Thing, the best Things, to which it is used and accustomed; nay, it is weary of the worst Things, even of Follies and Vanities, of Sin and Wickedness; and some new kind of Vice is industriously follow'd, and ambitiously imitated, and the old, as vulgar, condemn'd and neglected: Nay, tho' the Sins be as old as either *Noah* or *Adam*, yet if they come but dress'd up in some odd new Disguise, tho' it makes 'em a thousand Times more odious and deform'd, it satisfies their Curiosity, and saves 'em from the Shame, and the Scandal, of being sordid and servile Imitators.

And

# S E R M O N I. 19

And so remarkable is this Humour, that (perhaps) hardly two Centuries have succeeded one another in the same kind of Wickedness: If one Age be given to Luxury and Intemperance, the next leaves it off, and takes to Lust and Lasciviousness; if one be demure, and precise, and hypocritical, the next is as loose, and dissolute, and profane; if one Age be Atheists in Jest and Raillery, the next hates the fooling, and are so in good Earnest. And what Certainty can be expected from such mutable Creatures, in Civil, Moral, or Religious Opinions, that are not even constant in their Sins and Iniquities? Most of these Changes are not much beyond our Memories; and what Sin will be next, God only knows; some worse, I am afraid, unless God in his Mercy prevent it by some terrible Judgment: For it is no common Judgment that will awaken the World at this time of Day, scarce less than the Terrors of the Last and Great Judgment.

FROM what has been said, I shall now briefly deduce some few Practical Inferences, and so conclude. The Instability of these Things, or their transitory Nature and Condition, the Change or Succession of Men or Persons, and the Change too of Opinions, and Principles, and Practices,

## 25      S E R M O N I.

may afford us some good Thoughts, and very useful Meditations ; and that with regard both to others and ourselves, and with regard both to this World, and to that which is to come. It may teach us, not to have Mens Persons in Admiration ; for what alas ! is Man, that he should be so mightily regarded ? A Thing of nought, that passeth away as a Shadow, his Breath goeth forth, and all his Thoughts perish ; not only his proud, and aspiring, and ambitious, but his noble and generous, his great and good Thoughts perish.

It may teach us, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Not to put our Confidence in Man*, or any Child of Man, *Nor our Trust even in Princes* : For tho' they are Gods, and the Children of the most High, yet they die like Men ; nay, as tho' they were frailer, and more mortal than other Men, they die like themselves, and like all the rest of the Princes : So great and evident, and terrifying an Instance of this World's Uncertainty, as might make us tremble, and our Knees sink under us, and fall down to our Prayers.

AND as it may teach us, not to have other Mens Persons, so less to have ourselves, or our own Persons in Admiration : Not to be fond or conceited, or opinionative ;

# S E R M O N I. 21

tive; not to over-value our own, and despise others Judgments. We may be in the right, and abundantly satisfied, and assured that we are so, and be ready to suffer and die for our Persuasions; but if by all the fair Ways of Reason and Argument, we cannot make other Men Converts or Profelytes, we are not to make 'em Confessors and Martyrs to our Opinions. In themselves Men think it Zeal, in others they speak truly, and call it Persecution.

BUT farther; the Consideration of our Transitory State and Condition in this World, may teach us, as while we are in it to behave ourselves wisely, with Credit to ourselves, and Advantage to others; to be Lights in a dark, and Rules in a crooked, and Examples of Virtue in a corrupt Generation; so when we go out of it, since there is no avoiding it, to go out of it chearfully. We are now the Generation that goeth, and another cometh; and if we do not go, as to this World's Comforts, they had as good ne'er be born. As the Parents are oblig'd to provide for the Children, so is one Age for another, by their total Departure. All that we have to do, is to make good Use of the present, and to give up the World, not worse than we found it, but if possible better: And



to those that are coming, to leave our Estates, and Honours, and Preferments, and what will do them more good, to leave 'em worthy Examples.

T H U S far as to this World; but in respect to the other, the Consideration of this Transitory State and Condition may afford us much nobler and diviner Meditations. For besides, that the Enjoyment of that infinite Happiness, one Day, or one Hour, were worth all the Pleasures of this World, ever since the Creation; it is not only a Happiness compleat and perfect; but what makes it so perfect, immutable, and eternal: Were it less than it is, yet this one Consideration, that it never should end, would make it abundantly contentful and satisfactory; but this is that so much commends it, that it shall last for ever, and tho' the same, yet not tiresome; not tedious, tho' eternal. There shall all the Saints of every Age and Generation, the past, present, and the future, meet and join in one Communion; all their little Errors rectify'd, all their Disputes reconcil'd, shall be all of one Mind, and one Spirit, and with one Voice, and one Soul, give Praise, Honour, and Glory, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.

To

## S E R M O N I. 22

To which happy Place, and to which  
blessed Society, God in his good Time  
translate us all, for Christ Jesus's Sake.

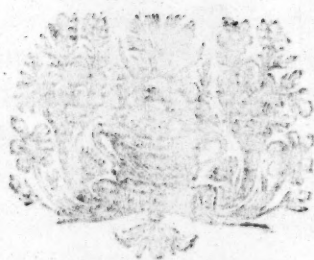
*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the Love of God, and the  
Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be  
with us all evermore. Amen.*



SERMON I.

To which happy Place, and to which  
Heavenly Society, God is his good Friend  
and Father, for Christ Jesus sake.

The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ  
is the Temple of God, and the  
dwelling place of the Holy Ghost  
in the hearts of his people.





## SERMON II.

---

ECCLES. I. 18.

*For in much Wisdom is much Grief, and  
he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth  
Sorrow.*



HAVE lately treated on those Words of Solomon, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*; and have shewn you the Imperfection of all worldly Happiness at large and in general, and shall now proceed with Solomon, and descend to Particulars. Only give me leave to repeat, and very briefly, one Caution; That when Solomon here pronounces all Things to be Vanity, he speaks of the Things themselves, and abstracted from Religion; for that indeed makes every Thing a Blessing and an Happiness; but so it does the Contraries, not only Riches and Honour, but Poverty and Disgrace; and a pious Man is happy in all Estates and Conditions, and it may be too, is often the most happy in the  
the



26      S E R M O N II.

the worst Condition. This being just premised, and which I desire may be remember'd, to prevent all little Objections, I proceed with the Royal Preacher,

AND it is worth our Observation, that the very first Instance he gives of the Vanity of all worldly Happiness, is his own greatest Excellency, that in which he as far exceeded the rest of Mankind, as the Cedar in *Libanus*, the Shrub or the Hyssop that groweth out of the Wall; there might be other Kings as rich and as wealthy as *Solomon*, and as great Masters, or rather as great Slaves of their Pleasures, others of as large and much larger Dominions; but in Wisdom and Knowledge he as far excell'd 'em all, as Light excels Darkness, or as Wisdom and Knowledge exceed Folly and Ignorance; and if, as he observes, *In much Knowledge is much Grief, and he that increases Wisdom increases Sorrow*, there never was a Man of more Grief and more Sorrow.

THO' there be no Doubt or Question, but that human Wisdom or Knowledge is the best Accomplishment and Glory of human Nature, yet has it many Allays, many Things that render it distasteful and dissatisfactory.

I. I T is painful and difficult.

II. I T is uncertain and imperfect.

III. I T is often unregarded, and often goes unrewarded.

IV. I T sometimes dies before a Man, it dies with him however; and yet it leaves him not so neither, he must give an Account too; and as much Grief as it brings him here, if he makes not good use of it, it will bring yet more Grief, and more Sorrow hereafter.

A N D these (tho' there be other) are Allays (I think) sufficient to justify *Solomon's* Assertion. I begin with the

I. T H A T human Wisdom or Knowledge in the Search or Acquisition is painful and difficult; and of this, even *Solomon* himself was so sensible, that as he begins so he concludes his Discourse with the very same Observation; it ran in his Mind still, was perpetually recurring, and lay at the bottom of all his Thoughts and Meditations: *By these, says he, my Son, be admonish'd, that in making many Books there is no end, and much Study is a Weariness of*  
the

*the Flesh.* And if he complain'd thus, who came so easily by his Knowledge, had much of it infus'd, and receiv'd it in great measure by Divine Inspiration, had extraordinary Helps and Assistances, to direct and encourage him in his Search after Knowledge; how much more Reason have others to take up the same Complaint? It is a common Opinion of the Unlearned and Ignorant, (and there is not a greater Sign and Argument of their Ignorance) that no Work or Labour, but only that of the Body, that tires the Limbs, and wearies and stretches the Nerves and the Sinews, is painful or difficult; if indeed it be their Judgment, and not rather their Envy than their real Opinion. They hear Men discourse in this Science or that Profession, very learnedly and eloquently, and think it costs them no more than the Utterance or Delivery. The poorest Day-Labourer lives at ease, and takes his Pleasure in respect of the Philosopher. *The Sleep* (says our *Solomon*) *of the Labouring Man is sweet*, his Mind is at rest, and his Soul itself sleeps as soundly as his Body; whilst the studious Enquirer is waking at his Lamp, and telling the Night-Watches, and racking his Head, and exhausting his Spirits, and when all the World is at rest, is at hard Work and Labour; and Sleep is

as great a Stranger to his Eyes, as Knowledge and Wisdom to the Foolish and Ignorant. The Sweat of the Brains, and the Sweat of the Brows, are no more to be compar'd, than old *Troy*, or *Rome*, to the *Iliads*, or the *Aeneids*; and the latter were fram'd by Hands more divine, and their Authors more immortal. There is not a plainer Argument (it is Evidence and Demonstration) of the great Pains and Labour that are necessary to the acquiring of Wisdom and Knowledge, than all Mankind's Experience. It is no small Difficulty to prevail with our selves, to make the Attempt to subdue our Reluctancy; for Ease and Idleness is almost as natural as Original Sin, as generally diffus'd, and as hardly eradicated. And when we have, in some measure, overcome this first Difficulty, and have set about the Task, we are often discourag'd: It is a long, tedious, and tiresome Journey, as grievous and heavy, even to Youth and Manhood, as the deep sandy Way to the Feet of the Aged; and tho' we start out early, and with never so much Alacrity, and continued our Speed with indefatigable Industry, it is a Business that will hold us, not only the few Minutes of this short Life, but would keep us employ'd even to the Age of *Metbusalem*.



II. AND as Wisdom or Knowledge in the Search or Acquisition, is painful and difficult, so to make it more painful, and increase our Vexation, it is uncertain and imperfect. For what St. *Paul* says of the other World, is, in a very great measure, as true also of this, *We know in part, and we prophesy in part*; or rather, not prophesy, but only surmise and conjecture: Or (as the Word may there signify) we explain or interpret in part, and imperfectly; and our very Expositions are almost as obscure, as the Prophecies themselves we pretend to interpret. We look on Things here, as *through a Glass darkly*, and the whole World is nothing but Riddle and Mystery. The Glass we use is dim and fullied, and our Eyes themselves are weak and tender; we neither see clearly, nor can look long and steadily; are often changing and turning the Perspective; and sometimes we lessen, and sometimes we magnify Objects to Excess and Extremity, and never see Things in their just and exact Shapes and Proportions; at best, go no farther than outward Appearances, Modes, and Qualities; and Words we have invented to shew our Knowledge, and hide our Ignorance; but can look no farther into the Nature and  
Essence

## S E R M O N II. 31

Effence of the least Thing on Earth, than we can see to the Center.

'TIS a severe Sarcaſm, that of Zopbar the Naamathite, in the eleventh Chapter of Job, *Vain man would be wiſe, tho' man be born like the wild aſs's colt*; a Creature made up of perfect Contradictions, fierce, and giddy, and dull, and ſtupid; wiſe and grave, and ſilly and ridiculous; and ſuch a Compoſition is vain empty Man, full of himſelf, and void of Underſtanding, conceited and ignorant; and it is almoſt as difficult to tame the wild Aſs, or to teach his Colt Knowledge, as to convince this wiſe Man of his Folly and Ignorance. But if we believe the ingenuous Confefſion of the wiſeſt Man that ever was, we ſhall grant all our Knowledge to be weak and imperfect. Hardly do we gueſs aright at Things upon the Earth, and with Labour do we find out the Things that are before us; *For the thoughts of mortal men, ſays he, are miſerable, and our devices are but uncertain.* And there is not a clearer Inſtance of our hardly gueſſing aright, even at Things upon the Earth, that we are not yet determined whether the Earth ſtand ſtill, or move a thouſand Miles in a Minute; that we who are here this Morning, ſhould by Night,

Night, and never perceive it, be all at the *West-Indies*; tho' nothing else be shook with the Motion, I am sure it shocks our Understanding. And if with Labour we find out, or think we find out, even the Things that are before us, at our Foot, and in our Eye, *the Things that are in Heaven* (as the Wise Man proceeds) out of our Sight, and far above us, *who hath searched out*, who hath made any Discoveries, either to others, or to their own Satisfaction? In these Things (to allude to the same Apostle's Expression) the wisest Man alive, the aged and most experienc'd, that hath put away childish Things, is a Child and an Infant, thinks as a Child, and understands as a Child, and talks as a Child, argues weakly, and talks very unintelligibly, and very imperfectly; 'tis hard to know what he would have, nor does he well know his own Meaning.

III. B U T farther, Another great Grievance of Wisdom and Knowledge, that too frequently attends it, is the little Esteem it meets in the World; a Grief and a Trouble, not only to those who have it, but those who see it in others, that it is often unregarded, and often goes unrewarded; a melancholy Reflection, and  
enough

enough to discourage and drive Wisdom, like Justice, out of the World, and leave it to itself, to be governed by blind Chance, or by more blind Ignorance. It is an instructive Parable, that in this Book of Solomon, and as moving and affecting as the real Example: *There was, says he, a little city, and few men within it, and there came a great king against it, and besieged it; and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he, by his wisdom, deliver'd the city; yet no man remember'd that same poor man.* He was scarce known before, and was quickly forgotten; and as his Wisdom had been unregarded, so was it afterwards unrewarded. And if it may not be thought Presumption to imitate Solomon, I would propose such another Parable. There was a little (at least if compar'd with other Kingdoms and Empires of the World) a little, or however a great Kingdom, and there was a mighty Monarch that rais'd all his Forces, and was ready to destroy that little Great Kingdom; when there was found (by meer Miracle, and wonderful Providence,) a Prince almost unknown, unobserv'd, nor much regarded, of no great Power, and of very little Dominion, and he, by his Wisdom, deliver'd that Kingdom; and yet there were few



that gratefully remember'd that wonderous Prince, and many that still magnify'd and admir'd the great Destroyer above their glorious Deliverer. But I return. The Inference that *Solomon* makes from his Parable, is this, That Wisdom is better than Strength; and yet adds, with Regret, *Nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard;* he speaks too soft to be regarded, and nothing is heard in this World but Riches and Honour: So true is that of the Son of *Syrach*, *When a rich man speaks, every one holds his tongue; and look what he says, they extol it to the clouds: but if the poor man speak, they say, what fellow is this?* Why, this Fellow may have more worth in him (than they; that is, nothing) than some of their Fathers that left them their Estates. It is enough to provoke even a wise Man's Indignation (but that he is wiser than to be mov'd with Anger at Objects of his Pity) to observe with what Contempt a rich empty Trifle will look down, or look over, a Man of Understanding; nay, the Mischief is infectious, and almost epidemical; and the wealthy Part of Mankind, not only the Gay and the Youthful, but the Aged and the Serious, the Miser and the Prodigal, the young Heir, and old Usurer, do look down

down on a Philosopher with as much Scorn, as a rich Cardinal on a poor begging Friar, who may yet be a greater Honour to the Church than his Excellency: Nay, the Mischief goes farther, and even wise Men themselves are touch'd with the Infection, and are apt to think, a Man has more Understanding, and talks more Sense, and will listen to him with more Attention, tho' they scarce mind what he says, but are thinking all the while on his Wealth and his Honour; they may make him indeed the more vain and conceited, but never the wiser or more understanding. So far hath the God of this World blinded Men's Eyes, and perverted their Judgments, that he is a wise Man indeed, that can discern plain Wisdom, and a good Man that can honour it, without these Advantages: Tho' they give it no Worth, yet they give it a Varnish; and Wisdom attended with Wealth and Honour, (to use *Solomon's* old Allusion, and no Man can make a better) *is like apples of gold in pictures of silver*; the viler Metal adds to the richer, and makes it look more illustrious! But the Contempt that is cast upon Wisdom and Knowledge, were easily born, or as easily cast off again with Contempt; but to see Wisdom starve, and ready to perish,

## 36      S E R M O N   I I .

to see Knowledge in Want, in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness, whilst Folly and Ignorance are cloath'd in Scarlet, and fare deliciously, is a Grief to the Eyes, and a Sorrow of Heart, and no less Grief to think there is no Remedy, no way in this World of redressing the Grievance; and yet there is hardly any thing under the Sun, scarce the Sun itself, more common and obvious, than to see a Man of Parts, of excellent Abilities, fit to govern a Nation, to sit at the Helm of Church or State, thrown into the Hold, and thrust under the Hatches. It is our Saviour's Saying, that *a candle is not lighted to be put under a bushel, but to be set on a candlestick*; and yet it is the Fortune of many great Persons, that would be Lights in the World, and were they plac'd in the Station they deserve, not only Lights, but Luminaries.

IV. A N O T H E R Allay of Wisdom or Knowledge, is the Decay or the Loss of it, either sudden or gradual, accidental or natural; for even this Perfection is like all human Glory, but as a Flower of the Field, and is sometimes cut down, and sometimes it fades and withers away. There is not, perhaps, a more piteous Sight in Nature, might raise in us at  
once,

## S E R M O N II: 37

once, both Astonishment and Compassion, make us sigh, and weep, and shake, and tremble, than to behold a Person, the Wonder and Oracle of the Age, and consulted as an Oracle, sit (like *Aaron* on Mount *Hur*) stripp'd of his Ephod, the sacred Breast-plate, and the *Urim* and *Thummim*, and scarce left so much as common Sense and Understanding; it were enough to make his best Friends, even in pure Pity, to wish he might die there, like *Aaron*, and never be more seen in the Land of the Living. And yet this sad Calamity has sometimes befall'n the greatest Ornaments of this, and of all other Ages; seiz'd on a sudden, strangely, and unaccountably, with an universal Forgetfulness, a black Cloud on their Understandings, and one large and dark Blot drawn over their Memories, as Men that had been long dead, and already pass'd into the Land of Oblivion.

AND tho' by God's Blessing we should escape all such Accidents, yet Time (like the Watcher in *Nebuchadnezzar's* Vision) and old Age (and no Angel was ever a greater Destroyer) will hew down the Tree, and cut off the Branches, and shake off the Leaves, and scatter the Fruit, and leave nothing remaining but the Stump



## 38      S E R M O N   II.

in the Earth, to be wet with the Dew of Heaven, and the Tears of all that behold it; the Trunk and Body of a Man, but the Soul and Spirit departed. Nay, tho' what seldom happens, Men retain'd their Understandings, their Reason, and Memories, to the very last Hour and Moment; yet in that very Hour and Moment; all their Thoughts perish, and their Knowledge and Wisdom vanishes away when they fall asleep, like a Dream when a Man awaketh. *And thus, as the Psalmist speaks, do wise men also dye, and perish together, as well as the ignorant and foolish; and tho' they may their Riches, leave not their Knowledge, and (the more is the pity) their Wisdom, to others.*

*Fifthly and lastly,* But besides all these, and many more Grievances, that attend Wisdom and Knowledge, there is one yet behind of more serious Consideration, and of much greater Concern, than all these together; and that is, the Account Men must one Day give of all their Wisdom and Knowledge; for as much Grief as it brought 'em here, if they make not good Use of it, it will bring 'em yet more Grief, and more Sorrow hereafter. As Power, and Authority, and Interest, and Reputation, and Riches, and Honour, are  
all

all of them Talents, so is Wisdom and Knowledge, and subject to as many Abuses. It is sometimes from a listless and a lazy Disposition buried in the Earth, and hid under Ground, of no more Use and Service than when it lay in the Ore, nor was (sure) worth the Labour of digging and refining only to bury it again. And tho' they knew the Lord, who entrusted the Talent, was an austere Man, and would expect his own with Interest, yet they let it lye dead, and made no Advancement: So far from improving, that they suffer'd it shamefully to be eaten out with Rust, and all over canker'd with Sloth and Idleness; and as it sometimes lays idle, and perfectly useless, so is it sometimes almost as idly employ'd: In little Trifles of no manner of Consequence, hard of Decision, and not worth the deciding, in clearing of Rubbish, that in a very few Years too will be Rubbish again: In sifting of Chaff, in Searches and Enquiries, that had nothing at all in 'em at first, and appear to have less, after all our searching and sifting: In thin, airy, and subtle Notions, as few Men can see 'em, and such as can, do see through 'em, and find 'em all common, and very ordinary Notions, long since receiv'd, and much better understood, and of more Use to

Mankind, when (what perhaps is the hardest and the artfullest Thing in the World) they were plainly, and easily, and naturally deliver'd. Men please themselves, and think they please others, with their Ideas, and are strangely and wonderfully edify'd, when it is often with them, as with him in the Prophet, That dreams he eats, and he awakes and is empty, and dreams that he drinks, and he awakes and is faint, more thirsty than ever, and is ready to faint and languish away.

O R tho' our Knowledge and Wisdom neither lie idle, nor be idly employ'd, but exercis'd in Things more useful and profitable; yet often to very idle, and oftentimes to very ill Purposes, to the vainest Thing in the World, Fame and Applause; to be prais'd out of Hearing, of which no Man is sensible, or to be prais'd to his Face, of which he is too sensible; and if he has any Modesty, knows not how to receive, or to take without blushing; and is almost as much out of Countenance to be told of his Worth, as his Faults, and is a Fault too, if he can bear to be told of it with a secret Complacency. That excellent Advice of our Blessed Saviour, is very applicable to this Purpose, *Be ye not like the Pharisees, who love to pray stand-*  
*ing,*

## S E R M O N II. 41

*ing, in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men ; verily, I say unto you, they have their Reward.* And a poor Reward it is ! to be admir'd by the Ignorant, and envy'd by the Malicious ; and by all wise Men to be scorn'd and despis'd, and by all good Men, to be pity'd and lamented. A poor and a sad Reward, and like that of the *Pharisees*, and yet all that they deserv'd, and all that they design'd ; for they pray'd but to be seen, and offer'd all their Services, and paid their Devotions to Men, and not to God Almighty. They had in this World the Reward of Saints, but in the next were to expect the Portion of Hypocrites.

AND as Wisdom and Knowledge are sometimes employ'd to very idle, so often to worse, to very ill Purposes ; not only to Pride, Vain-glory, and Hypocrisy, but to Envy and Hatred, and all manner of Uncharitableness : To the gaining a Name, or to the raising a Reputation, that however vain and foolish, is in comparison innocent, and only hurts a Man's self, but what is spiteful and mischievous, to the lessening or the taking away other Mens Reputations : And yet this is often the Use of Abuse that many make of their great Wisdom and Understanding, and the World  
perhaps



perhaps had never been honour'd with their Knowledge, or rather vex'd and disturb'd; but to wreak their Revenge, and as a fair Opportunity of venting their Malice. Whatever become of all their other Arguments, their Spite and ill Nature are plain Demonstration. So unworthy and inhuman (not to say unchristian) a Temper and Disposition, as those who are possess'd with it might wish with *Nero* in the beginning of his Empire, *Utinam nescirem litteras!* they could neither write nor read, rather than (with him, when debauch'd and degenerate) to dress their Fellow Creatures, and what is more, their Fellow Christians, in the shapes of Wild Beasts, only to worry 'em in pieces. If this be the Use they make of their Knowledge, they might wish indeed, with him, they had never known Letters, rather than every time they set Pen to Paper to pass Sentence of Death, and to sign some Execution.

THIS is certainly a great Abuse; and yet there is a greater, that some Men make of their Knowledge, not only to raise their Reputation, and take away the good Name of others, but revile and blaspheme, and even to take away the great and good Name of God Almighty; to expose it to contempt, to make it a Proverb of Reproach,

## S E R M O N II. 43

proach, and a By-word not among Heathens, but Christians. Such an horrid Impiety, as we are almost afraid to mention, and think it should thunder from Heaven at the Naming of such Wickedness; and yet this, (God help us! and yet how can we expect that that God should help us, whom we deny and blaspheme?) this is the Glory, the very Genius, and the Talent of the Present Age, to be distinguish'd from all other Ages by this Mark and Character; a blacker than that of the eleventh or twelfth Centuries, and the Consequence worse, not only the Corruption, but utter Loss of Religion; and all that will be left of it, will be look'd upon as Superstition. Good God! that Men should abuse their excellent Parts and Endowments against God himself, who gave them! That the Clay should say to the Potter, (not why hast thou made me thus? but) I am not of thy making. When he had form'd them curiously, and fashion'd them excellently, and made 'em fit for his own use, and design'd 'em Vessels of his Honour, that they should make themselves the Vessels of his Wrath and his Fury! 'Tis the Opinion of Learned Divines, and seems very probable and reasonable, that when good Men die, not only their Works do follow, but the good Works

Works of others; and do follow them continually; that the Virtues of those, who by their Means, or thro' their Occasion, their good Example, or good Counsel, were induced and persuaded to live piously and religiously; are a constant Addition, and new Increase of their Happiness; and as there is *Joy in Heaven over every Sinner that repenteth*; so more especially to these Saints, to these Prophets and Apostles, that under God, were the happy Means of that Sinner's Repentance: And on the contrary, that when ill Men die, not only their own Wickedness, but the Wickedness of others, whom they have any way seduced or corrupted, follows 'em, and overtakes 'em continually; that the Vices of those that were debauch'd by their Principles, and infected with Heretical or Atheistical Opinions, by the wicked Works they left behind 'em, are put to their Account, and constantly increase and aggravate their Torments, add Fuel to the Flame, and make it burn fiercer, and stir up the Worm within 'em, and make it more furious, and gnaw like a Vulture, and sting like a Serpent: And tho' nothing be more dreadful to 'em than the Thoughts and Expectation of the Great Day of Doom, yet even that were desirable, and that they may long and wish for the Coming of the Day of Judgment,

## S E R M O N II. 45

Judgment, rather than have their Miseries continually increasing: For tho' long since dead, they are still doing Mischief and corrupting others, and speaking of wicked Blasphemy, and talking against the most High; and it is hard to determine whether God be more revil'd by 'em in this World or the other. A dreadful Reflection! that Men should do Mischief perhaps to the End of the World; and tho' they are dead, they should not yet cease from Sin, but still be promoting of Prophaneness and Impiety. Whatever Charity be shewn to Men's Persons, yet I am sure the Writings of Hereticks and Atheists deserve to be burnt; it would not only be Charity to the Living, but the Dead, and a much greater Kindness than praying for their Souls, and a greater Ease of their Torments.

HAVING thus shewn you some of the many Inconveniences and Grievances, some certain, and some accidental, that attend Wisdom and Knowledge; that it is painful and difficult, uncertain and imperfect, often unregarded, and often unrewarded; that it sometimes dies before a Man, or with him however; and yet that he must give an Account too; and as much Grief as it brings him here, if he makes not good Use of it, it will bring him



him more Grief and more Sorrow hereafter: It may be said by some, as by the Disciples to our Saviour, in the Business of Divorces; *If this be the case of knowledge, it were better (sure) to be ignorant*; which is much such a Consequence as that of the Church of Rome, That because People abuse the Scriptures, therefore take 'em away, or keep 'em in a strange Language. But neither of these do follow: Let Men have Knowledge, and the People have the Scriptures, and let 'em use 'em both as they should do, that is, to God's Glory, and then we may wish, with *Moses*, that even all the Lord's People were Prophets.

AND this is the only Inference I shall make from this Discourse, and is as much as I doubt the Time, or your Patience, will suffer: That Men should apply their Knowledge, be it more or less, to the Honour of God Almighty. God hath given to every Man enough for his Occasion, (at least he may have it for asking, for *he gives to every one liberally, and refuses none*) Wisdom enough to make him happy; and if he who has but one Talent, shall double it by his Industry, and improve it to God's Glory, he is as faithful a Servant as he who had two or five, and

## S E R M O N II. 47

and will be as faithfully rewarded. This is the End, as well as the Beginning of Wisdom; and a good Understanding have all they that do thereafter; and the Praise of this, and of nothing else, endureth for ever. Now to God be all Honour and Glory, Praise and Adoration, now and for ever. Amen.



S E R-





# SERMON III.

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## ECCLES. II. 1.

*I said in mine Heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy Pleasure: and behold, this also is Vanity.*

N discoursing on those Words of Solomon, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, I propos'd this Method; *first*, To shew the Imperfection of all worldly Happiness at large, and in general, and then proceed with Solomon, and descend to Particulars. The first hath been examin'd, Human Wisdom or Knowledge; of which Solomon here declares, who was the best Judge of it, and speaks not only his Opinion but Experience; *That in much wisdom, is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* It may almost seem needless, and another Piece of Vanity, to prove, that since Wisdom and Knowledge cannot  
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give Men Content, nothing else can do it, and especially such a vain thing as Mirth or Pleasure: For, as *Solomon* says, *What can the man do, that cometh after the king?* So what can any thing else pretend, if Wisdom and Knowledge be not able to make a Man happy? However, since *Solomon* thought fit to make the Experiment, tho' he heartily repented, and confess'd it was only so much lost Time and Labour; and yet notwithstanding his Repentance and Confession, the greatest Part of Mankind are still of another Opinion, and fancy strange Happiness in Mirth and Pleasure, and think while we endeavour to persuade them to the contrary, we have only a mind to be pleasant ourselves; I shall therefore very seriously consider this second Instance; and doubt not but to make appear what *Solomon* here affirms, that this also is Vanity.

ONLY I shall first of all lay down two or three Cautions, which yet will be no Prejudice to *Solomon's* Assertions: For it is a known Rule, and has been so often repeated, it is almost as well known as a Proverb of *Solomon*, That general Aphorisms, not only of Philosophers, but of Scripture itself, are to be taken in a limited and a certain Sense, and admit of some

# S E R M O N III. 51

some Restrictions; otherwise they would not only be many times untrue, but often contradictory; tho' the Meaning of 'em be neither remote nor obscure, but easy and obvious, and every one understands and knows, at first hearing, the Sense that was intended; and therefore I shall readily grant, that there is indeed some Pleasure, and some kind of Mirth, that is neither vain nor foolish, but lawful and commendable, wise and necessary, and very useful and beneficial: But then such Pleasure must have these Qualifications; that it be innocent, and decent, and seasonable, and moderate.

FOR whatever Pleasure is any way sinful, it is not only Vanity, but Vexation of Spirit, and Trouble of Mind, and Horror of Conscience; and tho' we call them (I know not how) sinful Pleasures, the Distinction is senseless, and perfect Contradiction; for whatever is wicked, can never be pleasant; it is putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter: Nay, if I may be permitted to carry on the Contradiction, the sweeter the Pleasure, it is so much the bitterer.

AND as all true Pleasure is harmless and innocent, so must it be decent, and  
E 2 comely,

comely, and suitable; for all sorts of Mirth is not proper or agreeable to all sorts of Persons, nor to every Age, nor to all sorts of Conditions: What in some may look well, and be handsome Diversions, in others would be unseemly, and justly reproachable. Nothing can be pleasant that leaves a Man uneasy, that makes him but blush, or puts him out of Countenance. *Know thy self*, and *Reverence thy self*, are good old Sayings; for if thou do not, no body else will; and indeed, in good Manners, they ought not to know thee, when thou art not thyself, and appear'st in Disguise.

A N D as all Mirth and Pleasure should be harmless and innocent, and agreeable and decent, so must it also be seasonable. *There is*, says Solomon, *a time to laugh, and a time to weep*; and it were as unnatural to invert these Seasons, as those of the Year, to see Spring in Autumn, or Summer in Winter, as to see Men gay, and chearful, and pleasant, when all Things about 'em are drooping, and falling, or dead, and wither'd. In Times of private or of publick Calamities, when God's Hand is upon us, and when he calls us to Weeping, and Mourning, and Baldness, and Sackcloth; to behold Joy and Gladness,

# SERMON III. 53

Gladness, slaying of Oxen, and killing Sheep, eating Flesh, and drinking Wine, is surely an Iniquity not to be purg'd away, till we die; an Iniquity not to be forgiven, an Affront to God, and a Contempt of his Judgments, a despising and insulting over our Miseries: It is not like a Christian, but an Atheist, and an Infidel, in this Sense, to rejoice and triumph in Afflictions: But besides such Seasons as call for our Sorrow and Humiliation, there are others, which if they do not totally exclude, yet ought, at least, to lay some Restraint on our Pleasures; and those are the Times set apart and consecrated to the Service of God, and the Offices of Religion, and especially the Lord's-Day; for I am not at all afraid of being thought precise or superstitious, in affirming, it ought to be spent, more than it is, in Devotion, and not so much in Company, or in Sports, and Recreations. And there are no People in the World more notoriously scandalous in this Particular, than those who call themselves *Roman Catholicks*, that make no Scruple on this Day, if they have heard Mass in the Morning, to game all the Afternoon; unless, perhaps, their Confessors, since they deny them the Scriptures, think fit to allow them some Books they do understand. The Thought may



## 54      S E R M O N      III.

seem too light, but, I hope, no more than such an idle Prophaneness deserves. But I am not speaking to them, and it were in vain to tell People of their Errors, that are resolv'd they are infallible. But to those of our own Communion, I think I may take up the Expression of the Ruler of the Synagogue, with very little Alteration, and with a great deal more Reason; There are six Days in the Week, in which Men ought to divert; in them let them take their Pleasure, and not on the Christian Sabbath; especially those Persons, and they are most apt to abuse their Liberty, whose whole Life is nothing else almost but Pastime and Recreation. And I cannot but believe, that one of the great Reasons, why so many good Discourses on this Day, have so little Effect, is because Men do seldom think of them afterwards, but run into Company, and spend the rest of the Day in Idleness or Vanity, and cannot afford a short Hour to read and reflect. It is a very strange (wonderful) Sermon, and was never yet preach'd, that can practise itself.

BUT I return, and proceed to the fourth and last Caution. As our Mirth and Pleasure should be harmless, and decent, and seasonable, taken in due time, so should

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it not take up too much Time, but be reasonable and moderate, The plain End or Design of Pleasure, is either the refreshing of the Body or the Mind; and that in agreeable Exercise, and this in agreeable Conversation, and both very lawful, expedient, and necessary, not only upon natural Accounts, but even upon moral and religious Considerations. As the Body for want of Motion, and moderate Exercise, so the Soul itself for want of Society and Conversation, would contract ill Humours, be swoln with the Dropsy of Pride, or overflow with the Gall of Bitterness, or be over-run with the Spleen of Ill Nature; however, would feel a scorbutick Lassitude, would be weary of itself, and weary of the World, and quite out of Love with it, and almost out of Charity. There is nothing (unless a Man have a great deal of Grace, and a very mean Opinion, not of the World, but of himself, and a great deal of Humility) that is more apt to make him peevish, and morose, severe, and censorious, than a Life (if it be a Life) of perfect Retirement and Solitude; comparing himself with himself, and measuring himself by himself, and knowing no body better than himself, he is not like to be wise, but very proud and conceited, and will make very false Measures,

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and very odious Comparisons. As Exercise is necessary to keep the Body from Restiveness, so is it good to go abroad sometimes, to keep the Soul easy, and gentle, and pliable: For no Man is so good but he may meet with his Equals, and it may be, his Betters, if not in the same, yet in some other good Qualities, and may learn something; or if not learn, may instruct, and impart, and communicate some of his own Excellencies. Besides, a Life of no sort of Mirth or Pleasure, of no Diversion or Recreation, would strangely indispose him to every Office of his Religion; he would neither be able to read or contemplate, with any Zeal or Affection, nor be able to praise God with any Fervour or Devotion, would be lifeless, and spiritless; and, as in the Church of *Rome*, his Duties themselves would be heavy Injunctions, and saying his Prayers, doing so many Penances.

AND now, that I have granted and allow'd such Mirth, and Pleasure, as is innocent, decent, seasonable, and moderate, to be not only lawful, but upon many Accounts, both natural and religious, very expedient, and necessary; if this be the Mirth and the Pleasure that Men desire, let them take it, on God's Name! They may taste of it as freely as our first Parents,

Parents, of all the Trees round the Garden of *Eden*; but I doubt they have more mind to the Pleasure that is forbidden, and very much for that Reason, because it is forbidden. To be tied to such strict Rules, and bound to such hard Conditions, were not Pleasure, but Restraint; like the Liberty of a *Roman* Prisoner or Malefactor, that was chain'd to a Soldier, and tho' the Chain were neither very short, nor very heavy, but of a fair Length, and light enough, and very portable and manageable, and they may have leave (as *St. Paul* had) to visit their Friends, and refresh themselves with their Conversation, yet still they are Prisoners, shackled like Slaves; and they would be as free as those the wise Man describ'd, that reason'd thus with themselves: *Our Life, say they, is short and tedious, come, therefore, let us enjoy the good Things that are present, and let us speedily use the Creatures, as in Youth; let us fill ourselves with costly Wine and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with Rose-buds, before they be wither'd; let none of us go without his part of Voluptuousness, for this is our Portion, and our Lot is this.* This is the Life they would and do lead, a Life, as they call it, of Pleasure. And of this kind of Life, it is, that *Solomon* here pronounces,



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nounces, in the Verse immediately following the Text, *I said of Laughter, it is mad, and of Mirth, what doth it?* What do's it indeed? What good do's it do? And what a great deal of Mischief! As will appear to any one, even to the Persons concerned, if they had but the Patience to think a little, from these following Considerations.

I. T H A T such kind of Life is the most unnatural and unaccountable.

II. T H A T it unfits a Man for any thing that is worthy or generous,

III. T H A T it indisposes him to any thing that is serious or religious,

IV. T H A T it consumes a great deal of Time, which is very dear and precious.

V. A N D, as it is all Vanity, so it ends in Vexation of Spirit, in Sorrow and Misery.

O F these in their Order, and as briefly as possible.

I. T H A T an idle careless Life, a Life of Mirth and Pleasure, such as too many do

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do lead, and many more do affect, and would live so, if they might, is the most unnatural and unaccountable. Were there nothing in it of Sin, and no Account to be render'd, and Men died as they lived, and were for ever to be unquestionable, yet, methinks, they should be asham'd of living so impertinently, to no End or Purpose; so wretchedly, so fordidly, so much below themselves, and beneath the Dignity of their Nature; a Life that has no Meaning in it, and is all perfect Nonsense, enough to turn a wise Man's Head to see it, and puzzle and distract the best Understanding. We are apt to pity Idiots, and they do very well deserve our Pity, and God deserves our Thanks too, that we have our Wits and Senses; but what Objects of Pity are these vain Things of Mirth and Pleasure, that are perfectly besides themselves, and as (too) in distracted People, the Laughing Fit is more pitiable than the Sad and the Melancholy. When the Voluptuary in the Gospel had gather'd all his Wealth together, and meant to enjoy it and himself, and resolv'd to take his Ease, and *eat and drink, and be merry*; God says to him, *Thou Fool!* And a Fool he was upon a double Account, not only for his reckoning, and making sure of Uncertainties, but for the foolish Choice he made;

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made; and had God suffer'd him to go on, and let him take his Ease and Pleasure, he had lived as great a Fool as he died, and no less to be lamented: To be lamented in his Life indeed; and in his Death scarce to be lamented, but to be cast out with the Burial of the foolishhest of all Creatures.

II. *BUT Secondly*, It is a Life also that indisposes a Man, and utterly incapacitates him for any thing that is worthy or generous. It softens the Mind, and unbends, and slackens, and loosens all the Nerves and Sinews of Actions, effeminates the Spirit, and makes Men only fit Citizens and Companions of the antient *Sybarites*, such a loose, idle, and voluptuous sort of People, that (as all Historians tell us, and from no less a Man than *Aristotle*) they could not endure the least Noise but what was perfectly musical; till at last, to their utter Shame, no less than their utter Ruin, they were conquer'd by their Enemies in the Habit of Minstrels. And what great or good Action are they likely to atchieve for the Honour of the State, or the Service of their Country, that mind nothing but Pleasures, and are only fit to adorn a Triumph; and more likely and fitter to be led themselves in triumph?

III. A N D

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III. AND as a Life of Mirth and Pleasure indisposes a Man to any thing worthy and generous, so much more to any thing that is pious and religious; it spoils the Man, but it much more spoils the Christian. For tho' Religion be no dull, or doleful, and melancholy, (especially to those who live always well, and are constantly religious!) yet however, it is a grave, a very solemn, and serious Business, requires a great deal of cool Thought, of sober Reflection, and fix'd and close Consideration: And what of this can be expected from such a Sort of unthinking People, that have seldom the Head, and never the Heart to consider? Of so light, airy, and volatile Spirits, that there is no more taking or keeping them to Attention, than fixing the fleet Air, in a Storm or a Hurricane! the truest Emblem in the World of their Way of Living: A furious, rapid, rambling Round of Pleasures; and no sooner is one ended, but they fly to another: A continual Hurricane of Folly and Vanity. Were there nothing of severe or difficult in Religion, they could not bend themselves to that Part which is serious, have neither the Leisure nor the Patience. Perhaps, this very Moment, while they are address'd to so particularly,



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particularly, their Thoughts are abroad, are wandring after their Pleasures, where they had the last, and when they are to have the next pleasant Diverſion. The truth is, they do ſeldom bring their Thoughts hither, at leaſt not the Thoughts they ſhould bring hither, of Piety and Devotion : As may appear, and does appear, to their Shame, and the Grief and Trouble of others, by their vain, idle, and indifferent Behaviour ; as tho', as in their Garb and Habit, it were the Faſhion to be careleſs and negligent in Religion. And if they are not able to endure the eaſieſt Parts of their Duty, cannot read or meditate with any tolerable Attention, or pray to God with any Decency, or any manner of Devotion ; with what Patience would they bear, with what Impatience even hear of religious Hardſhips and Aſterities ? Of Watching, Faſting, Mortification, and Self-Denial ? That never watch'd in their Lives but to continue a Debauch, and never faſted but to recover it, and fit themſelves for another Debauch : And as to Mortification, or any ſort of Self-Denial ; have pleaſur'd and gratify'd, and never deny'd themſelves any thing their wild Fancies, if it were in their Power, could ſuggeſt. But ſhould Tribulation or Perſecution ariſe, becauſe of the Word, how ſoon would they

### S E R M O N III. 63

they be offended? They, who like the tender and delicate Woman describ'd by the Prophet *Moses*, that would not adventure to set her Foot to the Ground out of Tenderness and Delicacy; How would they lie on a Rack, or hang on a Cross, and give all the World to touch the Ground out of Pain and Torment! No, they are never likely to be Martyrs or Confessors, that think Religion itself the severest Persecution.

IV. BUT *Fourthly*, There is no Life in the World that does so vainly and unprofitably consume a great deal of Time, and that of all Things in the World the most precious and valuable. 'Tis the Observation of a wise Heathen, and tho' not so wise as *Solomon*, nor a Preacher, yet however a wise Man, and a Philosopher, "That  
 " in the Business of their Lands, their E-  
 " states and Patrimonies, Men are very  
 " strict and jealous, will suffer none to en-  
 " croach or usurp on their Inheritance;  
 " are as apt to fall out about their little  
 " Fences or Limits, as neighbouring Kings  
 " about the Bounds of their Empires; but  
 " in the Business of their Time, they can  
 " see and suffer any the rudest Encroach-  
 " ment, can permit the boldest and  
 " most unreasonable Usurpations: Nay,  
 can

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“ can throw it up themselves, and let it  
 “ lie waste and common, as tho’ it were  
 “ any body’s or no body’s, and their’s the  
 “ least of any body’s, and they had no  
 “ Right or Title to a Moment. They will  
 “ not give away their Wealth or Estates,  
 “ but their Time goes a begging; any  
 “ Folly or Vanity may have it for the ask-  
 “ ing; any Fancy or Humour upon the  
 “ very least Intimation; are more at a  
 “ loss, and rack their Heads and Inven-  
 “ tions how to spend their Time, than the  
 “ most covetous Wretch in the World,  
 “ which way to get an Estate:” *Are both,*  
*as the Prophet speaks, like the Troubled Sea;*  
*and they cast up Mire and Dirt,* and these  
 Froth and Foam, and both can take no  
 rest, and there is no Peace to either.

A LONG Life, especially if attended  
 with a good Measure of Health, is cer-  
 tainly a Blessing of God, and a very great  
 Happiness; but to those who live in Plea-  
 sure, to those who as the Apostle speaks,  
*Are dead while they live,* it is the greatest  
 Misfortune; like the long and endless Life  
 of those Wretches that lie in Flames and  
 Torments, their extremest Unhappiness.  
 An untimely Birth were better, and never  
 to have seen the Sun, to have died a Child  
 or an Infant, than to have lived such a  
 Life,

# S E R M O N III. 65

Life, to the Age of *Methusalem*; and tho' no Men in the World are so fond and desirous of long Life, and even envy the Days of the Old Patriarchs, and would be glad to live Nine hundred or a Thousand Years in Pleasure; yet as our Saviour told his Disciples, *They ask they know not what, and know not what they wish or desire.* This short Life as it is, these Threelcore and ten Years, may suffice to spend in Folly and Vanity; and tho' they do not think so in the midst of their Mirth and Gaiety, yet when they come to be serious, (and they will one Day be serious; either sad and serious in this World, or mad and desperate in the other;) they will confess it was too much, and wish God had cut them shorter, not let them live out half their Days: All their Mirth and Pleasure, all those light and empty Joys that were but for a Moment, are not to be compared with a Minute of their Sufferings, are nothing to a Moment of that eternal Weight of Misery.

V. *T H E Fifth and Last Particular, That a Life of Mirth and Pleasure is not only thro' the whole Course of it, all Folly and Vanity, but in the end, Vexation of Spirit, and eternal Grief and Misery. And of this, we have as perfect, and as lively a*



Description as is possible, in the Case of the rich Man in the Parable, *Who fared deliciously every Day, and spent, tho' not his Substance, yet his Life, in riotous Living.* How piteously does he beg, (more piteously than ever Beggar that lay at his Gates, and much fuller of Sores, and more ready to perish) but for the least Drop of Water, and yet is deny'd, and as pitilessly rejected: And the Reason of the Denial is more cruel and cutting than the Denial, and more killing than a thousand Refusals; when those Words were pronounc'd, *Son, remember that thou in thy Life-time receivest thy good Things:* Then he was in Hell, then, and scarce till then, he was in Flames and tormented. The Remembrance of his Pleasures was now the Height of his Misery: He should be happy almost in Hell, if he could but forget his past Life, and quite lose the Remembrance. And tho' his Sin was not only Luxury and Voluptuousness, but Unmercifulness and Uncharitableness; yet it is easy to observe that these Sins do often go together; and that those who mind their Pleasures, are so far from relieving, they seldom think, and can hardly endure the Sight of Affliction. *They who (as the Prophet speaks) do lie on Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves on their Couches, that chaunt to the Sound*

# S E R M O N III. 67

*Sound of the Viol, and invent Instruments of Musick, and the Harp, and the Tabret, and Wine are in their Feasts; do neither regard the Works of the Lord, nor the Afflictions of their Brethren. They do not, but they shall see, and be asham'd of their Folly. When their Pomp is brought down to the Grave, and the Noise of their Viols ceased; the Worm shall be spread under them, and over them, and cover them, and a worse Worm within 'em, shall tear and gnaw their Hearts for ever. So truly may that of our Saviour be apply'd to these People; Woe unto them that laugh now, for they shall mourn and weep. Their vain Joy and Pleasure, their Grinning and Laughter, will end in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing to all Eternity.*

FROM what has been said, I need not make any Inferences, they are plain enough and terrible. And therefore I shall conclude all with this two-fold Exhortation.

THAT we would avoid all vain, and idle, and spurious, and set our Minds on true and genuine Joy and Pleasure. The first you have heard describ'd, and I hope too, in such a Character, as to be pity'd and despis'd, or abhorr'd and detested. The other is to be found in an innocent, chear-

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ful, sober, virtuous, pious, and religious Life. But this is above Description; a Pleasure which those who enjoy it, are not able to express! And I cannot but think, that any Man who knows what it is to live well, and serve God, and do his Duty, tho' weakly and imperfectly, yet honestly and sincerely, with all his Heart, and to his Power; would not change his Way of Living, for all the Pleasures in the World; his quiet, contented, comfortable Way of Living for all the Pleasures of this World, and but just, and only for the Pleasures of the other. And thither it leads him; and thither it will bring him with Peace and Joy unspeakable, to the happy Company of Prophets and Apostles; to the joyful Society of Saints and Angels; to the blissful Sight of God himself; that God, *in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.* To which happy Place, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all for Christ Jesus's Sake.

*To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Adoration, and Thanksgiving, now and for ever. Amen.*

S E R-



## SERMON IV.

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ECCLES. III. 16.

*And moreover, I saw under the Sun, the Place of Judgment, that Wickedness was there; and the Place of Righteousness, that Iniquity was there.*



YOU may possibly remember, that in treating on those Words of Solomon, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, I propos'd this Method: *First*, To shew the Imperfection of all worldly Happiness at large and in general, and then proceed with Solomon, and descend to Particulars. The Two first have been examin'd, *Human Wisdom* or *Knowledge*, and *Mirth* or *Pleasure*: And the first was found too light, and the second almost lighter than *Vanity* itself. I proceed now to the *Third*, That is, *Honour* or *Glory*, of which again Solomon was as competent a Judge, as of *Wisdom* or *Pleasure*. And this also he



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produces as an Instance of *Vanity*; and not only *Vanity*, but *Vexation of Spirit*. His Discourse on this Argument, he begins in this Chapter with the Words I have read, and concludes it with those in the fifth Chapter: *If thou seest the Oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice in a Province, marvel not at the Matter; for he, that is higher than the Highest, regardeth, and there be higher than they.* I confess indeed, that both by the Beginning and Conclusion of *Solomon's* Argument, I should be obliged to discourse of Power and Authority, and of the Abuses and Corruptions of Government. But such Things are not proper in religious Assemblies, and tend but little to Edification, and is none of our Business: If we should see the *Perverting of Judgment and Justice in a Province*, it is none of ours, to be shewing, and especially in these Places, exposing it to others. And therefore, I shall chuse rather to decline this Part of the Argument, with this useful Reflection; That if in the Days of *Solomon* there were many Abuses and Corruptions crept into the Government, which tho' he might observe, yet he could not redress; Men should never wonder, or be suddenly cast down, to see such Things, in the Reign of the wisest, and the justest, and  

the

# S E R M O N IV. 71

the best of Princes. For tho' a King were endued with all the Wisdom of *Solomon*, and were (as the Scripture speaks) as an Angel of God; yet some of those ministering Spirits that wait round his Throne, may be another sort of Angels; and ready to betray the Throne they surround, and seem to guard and support. And yet were they remov'd too, and justly degraded, and cast out of his Presence for ever, and cover'd with eternal Shame and Dishonour, and others with Pretences of greater Service and Fidelity advanc'd to their Stations; there may indeed be in Persons, but in the State of Affairs, no great Change or Alteration. If they had not before the same Designs and Principles, yet they learn them quickly, or by degrees, and insensibly; like *Hazael*, when he came into Power and Authority, that proved the very same Creature he abhor'd and detested. And therefore, we should do well to take the Counsel of *Solomon*; and if we see *Justice in a Province perverted*, not to *marvel at the Matter*, or be much amaz'd or disturb'd. *He that is higher than the Highest*, both sees and regards; And this should content us; but not so much, hoping he will punish such Faults and Abuses as they deserve; but when we shall deserve, he will mend the Faults, and reform the

## 72 S E R M O N IV.

Abuses. And therefore, tho' *Solomon*, as he was a King himself, might take the Freedom and Privilege to tax the Miscarriages, either in his own, or in the neighbouring Kingdoms; yet I do not think it either prudent or modest to come too near to a King, or to follow him too closely, but to observe more Respect, and to keep at a distance. And paying all Reverence to Supreme Power and Authority, (of which, God be thanked, we have no reason to complain, and all the Reason in the World to bless God Almighty,) I shall only (I say) consider the Lower Honours and Dignities, of which most Men are fond, and of which more Men are capable, and fancy strange Things in them; and think, were they but so happy as to attain them, they should not envy Kings and Princes.

AND yet of these, it may be said to the same Purpose; I saw the Place of Honour that Vanity was there; and the Place of Greatness, that there was Vexation, and Trouble, and Misery. In speaking to this Subject, I shall observe this easy and natural Method, and almost unavoidable.

I SHALL consider Honour under these Four Particulars.

I. T H E

## SERMON IV. 73

- I. THE Difficulty of acquiring it.
- II. THE Trouble of preserving it.
- III. THE Fear of losing it.
- IV. AND the Danger of abusing it.

AND these, tho' there be other very unhappy Attendants, that wait on it continually, may serve to lessen our Opinion, and cool our Affection, and curb our Desire, and our Pursuit of Honour.

OF the first Three I shall be brief; and insist chiefly on the Last Particular, as most useful and profitable.

FIRST then, Worldly Honour is very difficult in the Acquisition. It depends upon so many unforeseen and unconceivable, so many little and trifling, so many great and wond'rous Accidents, upon so many Things that look like Chance, and so many Things that look like Miracles; and these all join'd together in a Chain almost imperceptible, and yet had any one Link fail'd, the whole Chain had broke all to pieces; that whoever shall consider Honour in the Theory or Prospect, would think



think it not only difficult to be acquir'd, but impossible. And he who has arriv'd to any degree of it, and shall seriously reflect on the many past Occurrences, some cross, and some favourable, and perhaps too, the cross'est, the most favourable Occurrences, shall wonder more than any, and stand more amaz'd than others at his Honour.

T H E usual Means of Advancement are either Merit and Industry, or Favour and Affection, and yet do all often miscarry : According to that Observation in this Book of Solomon ; *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, nor Bread to the Wise, nor Riches to Men of Understanding, nor Favour to Men of Skill, but Time and Chance happens to them all.* Strange Seasons, and wonderful Opportunities, overrule Men in all their Designs, and in none more, than in those of Honour : It is a Race, that is so far from being always to the Swiftest, that many times those that walk slowly and leisurely, have not only won the Prize, but the Prize itself has met them half-way, and been reach'd out to them by a kind Hand of Providence ; whilst others that stretch'd all their Nerves and Sinews, and strain'd their Spirits, and perhaps too, their Consciences, and crouded  
all

# S E R M O N IV. 75

all about 'em, and overthrew all before 'em, have not only fall'n short, but back with Disgrace. So true is that of the *Psalmist*, *Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor the West, nor the South*; but like the Wind, *It blows where it listeth*; or rather where God directeth: *He putteth down one, and he setteth up another*; and in his Hand there is a Cup, and in his Hand there is a Crown; and he giveth that to these, and this to those, as he pleases.

II. AND for the very same Reason, and upon all the same Accounts, that Honour is hard to be acquir'd, it is as hard to be preserved. One would think indeed that Understanding and Prudence, Industry and Diligence, Honesty and Fidelity, should be sufficient Securities. And yet so far from securing, they many times expose a Man to Hatred and Envy, and do often secure nothing but his Ruin and Destruction. It were endless to give Instances, both out of Secular and Sacred History, of worthy and excellent Persons, that have been undone by their Worth and Excellency. The very first good Action that we read of in the World, what was the Effect of it, but the Ruin of the Author? How God testify'd his Favour and Respect to *Abel's* Sacrifice, is disputed and uncertain; whether

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whether by a Fire from Heaven, or by a bright Beam from the *Shecinah*, that consum'd the Offering : But it is certain, that it was Envy that consum'd the Offerer. A strange Envy indeed, and with the Wicked, the most unusual ; that could not endure even the Honour that cometh from God Almighty ! But tho' the Honour that comes from God might be a Grief and a Trouble in the Infancy of the World, it has hardly ever since been regretted ; it is the Honour that comes from Men, that is the Object of our Envy : If that hath slain one, this, like *Saul*, hath slain Thousands, or like *David* Ten thousands. And having mention'd *David*, give me leave, instead of others, to insist on his Example. For as never, perhaps, any Person arriv'd to so great Honour, more justly and deservedly ; so never, perhaps, any Person maintain'd the Honour he acquir'd with more Danger and Difficulty. All his happy Successes, and all the Conquests he obtain'd, created him more Enemies at home, than he destroy'd of the *Philistines* : No sooner had he slain *Goliath*, but *Saul* himself was his Enemy. It is hard to say, whether his Foes or his Friends did him more mischief : Those who sate in the Gate, and spake against him, and the Drunkards that made Songs upon him ; or those, who  
met

# S E R M O N IV. 77

met him in triumph, with that joyful Acclamation, *Saul hath slain his Thousands,* and *David his Ten thousands*: A Song that did him more harm and injury than all the Songs of the Drunkards.

AND tho' no Man ever behav'd himself more modestly and inoffensively, as meek and as humble in his Triumphs, as in his greatest Affliction: When brought before *Saul* with the Head of the *Philistine*, demeaning and expressing himself more like a Captive than a Conqueror; *thy Servant is the Son of Jesse the Bethlemite*: Yet was he persecuted by that Prince, whom he had preserv'd from Infamy, and banish'd from that Country, whose Battels he had frequently fought, and had preserv'd too from Slavery. And this has ever been the Fortune of those that are in high Places: And tho' it cost 'em a great deal of Labour and Pains in the Ascent, yet is it as great a Labour to them, and a Pain to keep their standing; and could they but safely and decently, they would often come down again, and be glad to leave the Precipice. So frightful a Station, as not only those above, are not able to look down; but even those who are below, are scarce able to look up to it without Fear and Trembling.

III. AND



III. AND this is the third Grief and Trouble that always attends worldly Honour; the Fear of losing, or being deprived of it. For tho' there may be some Persons of that great and noble Spirit, as to be even above their own Honours, to look down on all their Glories; not out of Pride, but out of a Sense and Experience of their Vanity: Yet these are so very few in respect of the Generality, as scarce to make an Exception. The most part of Mankind are usually so fond and jealous of Greatness, as scarce to possess it, while they have it, and for very Fear of losing it, can hardly ever enjoy either themselves, or their Honour: And never were their Fears more natural, and almost unavoidable, in such a World of Revolutions. Scarce the Heaven, or the Earth, if it move, moves so swiftly as Human Affairs; nothing on this, or under that, is fix'd and permanent. Winter and Summer, Seed-time, and Harvest, Day and Night, succeed not one another more duly, and scarce more closely than Shame and Disgrace do Honour and Glory. He who to day is the Favourite of a Prince, and the Darling of the People, is to morrow the Offscouring of the Earth, the Offscouring of the Scum of the Earth, and the Outcast of the People.

## S E R M O N IV. 79

ple. And tho' a good Mind, and an innocent Conscience, could bear all this very patiently perhaps, yet few are so very patient; and fewer so very innocent, or tho' never so innocent, yet in an ill-natur'd World, those who have been loaded with Honours, are sure to be loaded with more heavy Reproaches. And tho' the Loss of that were tolerable, yet he that can tamely sit down with the Loss of his good Name and Reputation, must be one of the Extreams, a most profligate Wretch, or a most excellent Christian; one that believes no God; or one that believes nothing else but God and his Providence.

IV. BT besides the Difficulty of acquiring, and the Danger of preserving, and the Fear of losing; there is yet a greater Difficulty, a greater Danger, and Fear of perverting and abusing this Honour. Among the many Snares and Temptations to which it usually exposes; I shall mention but three, Pride, Injustice, and Prophaneness: It is too apt to make Men haughty and conceited, injurious and oppressive, and prophane and irreligious. Forgetful of their whole Duty both to others and themselves, and even to God Almighty.

### I. T H E

I. THE first Temptation to which it exposes, (tho' this indeed is a Sin that needs but little Temptation) is Pride and Haughtiness; not as tho' it were impossible for a Man to be modest and great, and humble and honourable; and the more modest the greater, and the more humble the more honourable; but this is so rarely seen, and even where it is observ'd is so apt to be suspected as Design and Popularity, that Men rather chuse to take the plain, open, and direct Way of Pride, than to go so far about, and take such a Compass as an affected Humility. The little envious World, so forward and assuming, has taught them not to part with a Tittle of their Honour; to challenge rather more than their Due or Desert, and not to sink below, but to rise above their Dignity. *Elihu*, indeed, in *Job*, speaking of the Greatness of God, and his wonderful Perfections, says, *That he hideth Pride from Men*; has left 'em no Occasion, no Ground or Pretence to be proud and conceited; has put it out of their Way, out of the Sight, and out of the Reach of the greatest Man alive; and yet wherever hid and conceal'd, there is hardly any Man alive, but has made a shift to find it. Something he either discovers or fancies  
in

## S E R M O N IV. 81

in himself, that serves to feed his Pride and Vanity: And if the Little can find it, the Great will not fail to lay in their Title; those are but Miners, and at best but Discoverers; these are the Lords of the Soil, and claim the rich Treasure as their Right and Property.

2. A N D as Greatness and Honour often prove Temptations to Pride and Haughtiness, so they often tempt Men to Oppression and Injustice. It is sad to consider, how strangely Human Nature is inclin'd to what it abhors, and even prone to Ingratitude; to pervert and abuse the Gifts and Favours of Providence; the more God smiles on them, to frown the more on others; and the more they are confirm'd in their Power and Greatness, not to strengthen or relieve, but to weaken and oppress their Brethren! It is certainly the Design of Pre-eminence and Authority, to be a Defence and a Refuge to the Poor and Oppressed, but how often is it otherwise? Instead of a Shield and a Buckler, a Sword and a Spear, a Maul and a Hammer! It should indeed be a Refuge from the Storm, and a Shadow from the Heat, but is often the Storm itself, and the Heat of the Sun, and the hotter and fiercer, the higher it rises.



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*Man in Honour*, says the Psalmist, *hath no Understanding, but may be compared to the Beasts that perish*; and were it only to the more innocent, it were not so grievous and odious a Comparifon; but, alas! he is more like the wild and the favage, and lives upon the Spoil, and preys upon the Weak, the Helpless, and Innocent. There's no arguing or remonftrating to the Great and the Powerful; if they cannot have *Naboth's Land* on their own Terms and Conditions, like *Ahab*, they will have both his Life and his Vineyard: And what is worfe too, when they have done fome unjuft or ill Action, they think themfelves bound to maintain it in Honour. And tho' *Elijah* himfelf, or the Ghofit of *Elijah*, met and told them of their Fault, they would fcorn to be humbled, or walk foftly, like *Ahab*; but to bear their Heads higher, and walk even fo much the more proudly and loftily.

3. B U T this is not all yet: Befides the defpifing and injuring of others; and let the Potfherds ftrive with the Potfherds of the Earth, and dafh againft one another, and the Veffels of Honour fall too on the weaker Veffels of Difhonour, (tho' of the fame Clay as themfelves) and break them in Pieces; but let them not ftrive with  
4 their

# S E R M O N IV. 83

their Maker; let not such brittle Creatures, that cannot bear his least Touch, let them not strive with their Creator! And yet they do, and will strive with him, and even for Superiority. And the Great and the Mighty, that have hardly own'd a God themselves, have aspir'd to divine Honours, have been even worshipp'd and deified. I would not be thought to diminish or derogate from the Reverence and Respect that is always due to Greatness; it is the Image of God, and tho' it should not be idoliz'd, yet should it not be slighted, nor rudely treated and affronted. Besides, there are some, I am loth to say few, I could be glad to say many; but yet there are some, that in the midst of their State, and in the height of their Honour, with all their Pomp and Greatness, forget not themselves, and much less, and never, forget God Almighty; that behave themselves as humbly in his Presence and his Service, as tho' they were the lowest and the meanest of their Retinue: Some there are, indeed, and were there more, were there many, there would hardly be any others; their excellent Examples would bring Virtue and Piety into Credit and Reputation, and shame all Prophaneness and Irreligion out of Countenance. But, alas, shall I

go on! shall I discover their Miscarriages, and their Faults of this Nature? Alas! they are too visible, too apparent to be conceal'd, and themselves scarce desire to have them conceal'd, or to fear their Discovery: They even declare their Sin as *Sodom*; and not only in the Presence of good Men, that are griev'd with their unrighteous Behaviour, but even in the Presence of God and his holy Angels. It has been observed, that our blessed Lord never shew'd any thing like Anger or Passion, in all his Life, but upon one great and just Occasion, the prophaning the Temple; and if any thing can deserve a little Passion in this Place, it is what may too often be seen in this Place; (tho' not indeed so very often, yet as often as themselves are seen in this Place) the strange and indecent Carriage of those who pretend most to good Carriage and Civility. Would it not move any Man that had any Sense of Religion, with some kind of Impatience, and a little Indignation, to observe how God, even by those whom he has honour'd, is lightly esteem'd, is little, is least of all, regarded? It is almost thought a Favour, if they will enter his Courts, and vouchsafe him their Presence; but to shew any manner of Respect or Devotion, to bow the Head, to incline the

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# SERMON IV. 85

the Body, to bend the Knee, even whilst they are, or should be, and others are, praying, is too much below them, too great Condescension, so unusual, it is (almost) unseemly in Persons of their Rank and Quality. Unhappy Creatures! Do they think they are too good or too great to serve God? Alas! they are not good enough, nor great enough; and were they better and greater, not worthy the Honour of approaching his Presence, of kneeling before him, or falling down at his Footstool. The Angels themselves, the noblest of his Creatures, are said in his Presence to cover their Faces: And I doubt too, if they are present at his Service and Worship (as they have always been suppos'd) they turn away ashamed, and cover their Faces, at such unseemly Behaviour. And if they shew so little Piety, so little Sense of Religion, so little Fear of God, in the midst of his Sanctuary, even in the time of his Service, and in the Place of his Holiness, how little do they stand in awe of him at other Times, and in other Places? It is to be fear'd that God is hardly in all their Thoughts, is almost totally neglected, and utterly forgotten. And thus, as the Apostle speaks, do Men *live without God in the World*, and for the worst Reason in



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the World; they think they can live without him, because he has been wonderfully kind to them, has rais'd them to great Wealth and Honour, and they are so great and so happy, that they stand in no need of his Blessings or Providence.

THE natural Inferences from all this Discourse, are very easy and obvious, and applicable to all People, to those of high, and to those of low Degree, or of no Degree at all; to the greater and more honourable, and to the meaner and more ignoble; and as those have no Reason to be proud or conceited, so these have less Reason to envy their Greatness; were Things rightly consider'd, these are rather to be envy'd, and those indeed to be pity'd. In dissuading the Great and Honourable, from being proud or high-minded, or over-valuing themselves, on their Greatness and Honour, tho' there are many good Arguments, yet I shall only propose these two Considerations.

1. THE Uncertainty of this World.

2. AND the Certainty of another.

1. As to the *first*, it is so evident to our daily Experience, that instead of proving,

# S E R M O N IV. 87

ving, I shall chuse to illustrate it, with a memorable Passage out of ancient good History, and as useful and instructive as any the most visible or present Example.

“ The great *Sesostris*, King of *Egypt*, having, in several Battels, conquer’d four other Kings, and taken them Prisoners, with great Pride and Insolence, when at any time he was dispos’d to ride abroad for his Pleasure, he compell’d them to draw his Chariot ; but seeing one of them all the way looking back, thoughtful and very serious ; he ask’d him what it was he regarded so attentively ; who told him, he was looking at the Wheels of the Chariot, and observing their swift Motion, how quickly they turn’d about, and those Parts that were uppermost, were soon again lowest ; which put him in mind of the strange Turns of Fortune, and could not but make him reflect on this World’s Uncertainty. At which the great *Sesostris* was so sensible, and ashamed, that he dismiss’d them all presently, and would never more be drawn in that proud insolent manner.” And I could wish too, that some Kings, who would be thought the most Christian, would be instructed by this great Heathen, and much greater Conqueror ; and

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instead of being drawn only in Pomp and Pageantry, not trample on Princes, nor ride over the very Necks of Kings in Triumph: For as safe as they think themselves, the Wheel may soon turn about, and they who are highest may be laid on the Ground, and their Honour in the Dust; or if not their Honour, themselves may be laid there, and wish they might lay there, and never rise too again.

2. B U T this will not serve them, they must yet rise again, and give an Account of their Works too, of their Pride, Injustice, and Prophaneness, of all their hard Speeches against God, and of all their hard Usage of others. The very Thought of this World is enough to cool their Spirit, but the Thought of another is enough to make them tremble. And would to God they had Patience but to think of it seriously; it were enough to take down their high Looks, and their proud Stomachs, and make them the meekest and the humblest Men alive: For the Time is coming (whether they think of it or no, and it is never the farther, because they do not think of it; and perhaps too, the nearer; and the longer it stays, and the less they think of it, will be the more dreadful) the Time, I say, (and God him-  
self

# S E R M O N IV. 89

self too has said it, God has said it that cannot lye) the Time is coming, from the Top of the Rocks it appears, and from the Hills it approaches, when all the Tribes of the World shall be gather'd together, and not only the nearest, but even the uttermost Parts of them shall be easily seen, even all that vast Multitude; where the Great and the Small, the High and the Low, the Rich and the Poor, one with another, without any Difference, without any Distinction, shall receive their Sentence, their irrevocable Doom, that shall be pass'd in a Moment, and shall last to Eternity. How gladly then would the powerful Oppressors change Conditions with those they had oppressed and persecuted? And call to those Hills, and Rocks, and Mountains, to which they had driven so many thousand poor Creatures, to starve with Cold, or to perish with Hunger, to fall on them, and cover them; and to hide them, not only from the Face of God, but of these poor Creatures they had so cruelly persecuted? Not the grim Faces of the Fiends themselves, will be so terrible to them, as the Sight of those Saints, and Martyrs, and Confessors. What will it then avail to have been loaded with Honours, with regal, imperial, or pontifical Dignities, to have worn, or to have



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have dispos'd of Crowns and Diadems? When the greatest, both civil and sacred Usurpers, that oppress'd all Mankind, shall stand upon a Level with the meanest of their Vassals, with the Slaves of their Pleasure, with the base Executioners of their Edicts and Anathema's; What would they then give (even all their Crowns and Scepters, those they were born to, and those they had purchas'd) that they had made a good Use of their Power and Authority? That they had only employ'd it to *loose the Bands of Wickedness, to undo the heavy Burdens, to free the Oppressed, to break every Yoke,* and, as far as in them lay, to set Mankind at Liberty. They who thus employ'd their Power (to use the Apostle's Expression) their Light shall shine, even in that dark gloomy Day; *it shall break forth as the Morning; their Righteousness shall go before 'em, and the Glory of the Lord shall be their Reward.* He that led them, and guided them, and crown'd them with Victory, shall receive them to himself, and shall crown them with Glory. And they too, who in any of the lower Degrees of Honour, have behaved themselves uprightly and inoffensively, have *shewn Justice, and lov'd Mercy, and walk'd humbly with God,* have fought and promoted, not their  
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## S E R M O N IV. 91

own, but his Honour, even they, in a lower Sphere, and a less Orb of Glory, even they too shall shine as the Stars of Heaven for ever.

THE other Use or Inference I shall make from this Discourse, is of larger Extent, and affects the far greater Part of Mankind, the middle and lower Rank of People: That they would all be contented and satisfy'd with their Condition, and not look with an envious Eye upon other Men's Power and Honour, which is only to envy them a great deal of Trouble here, and a greater Account hereafter. For tho' in the Parable, he who received but one Talent, went and buried it in the Earth, yet in the World, and in Experience, it is many times otherwise; and they who receive five, and they who receive ten Talents, are often the worst Servants, and instead of only burying, do waste and consume them on their Lusts and their Pleasures; and when their Lord comes, and reckons with them, will wish they had received but one, or none, and had been utterly forgotten. But to conclude, for I fear I presume on your Patience, let those who were born, or whom God has rais'd to Honour, be careful to behave themselves meekly and humbly, kindly  
and

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and charitably; and especially, and above all Things, piously and religiously. And those whom God has plac'd in a middle or lower Station, not only be contented, but even think themselves happy, as their Burthen, so their Account, will be lighter and easier; and tho' they had but one Talent, or tho' they receiv'd but the poor Widow's Mite, yet if they were thankful, and devoted even that to God's Service, even they shall receive the Blessing; and for having been faithful in a little, their Reward shall be great, and they too shall enter into the Joy of their Lord.

*To which, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for Christ Jesus's sake; to whom, with the Father and the blessed Spirit, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.*





# SERMON V.

ECCLES. V. 10.

*He that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance, with Increase: This is also Vanity.*



WHEN I enter'd upon this Book of *Solomon*, and discours'd on these Words, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, I propos'd this Method:  
*First*, To shew the Imper-

fection of all worldly Happiness at large, and in general, and then proceed, with *Solomon*, and descend to Particulars. The three first have been examined, Human Wisdom, and Pleasure, and Honour. I come now to the last, and that is Wealth or Riches: Of which also *Solomon*, the richest King of *Israel*, was as competent a Judge as of any the other Instances; and  
speaks



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speaks not out of Ignorance, or Envy, or Prejudice, but from his own Sense and Experience; yet he freely declares, in the Words of the Text, that *this also is Vanity*. And to prove what he says, he gives several good Reasons, in the following Verses of this Chapter; and therefore I shall look out no farther, and can find out no better; and shall take them in the same Order, and follow his own wise Method.

AND the first Reason he brings to shew the Folly and Vanity of those who place their Happiness in Wealth and Riches, is this of the Text, That Riches are unsatisfactory. But before I proceed, I must beg your Leave and Patience, to repeat (briefly) one Caution laid down at the Entrance of these Discourses: That when *Solomon* here declares all Things to be Vanity, he speaks of the Things themselves, and abstracted from Religion; for that, indeed, makes every thing a Comfort and an Happiness: But so it does the Contraries, not only Honour and Riches, but Disgrace and Poverty; and a pious Man is happy in all Estates and Conditions, and is often (it may be too) the most happy in the worst Condition. This being just repeated, and which I desire may be remember'd,

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remember'd, to prevent all little Objections ; I proceed with the Royal Preacher, *He that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver ; nor shall he that loveth Abundance, be satisfied with Increase: This also is Vanity.* And not only Vanity, but Vexation of Spirit; enough to vex a Man to the Heart, that he should spend all his Pains and Labour in raising an Estate, only to make himself happy, and to find he is never the nearer, never the better, or the happier, but as far, or farther than ever from being contented and satisfied. That he should not only reap the Wind, that is, Folly and Vanity, but that he should reap the Whirlwind, Trouble and Destruction. These are two plain Evils (implied in these Words of *Solomon*) that attend the Love of Riches. The Desire or Appetite, which is insatiable, and make Men think they never have enough, or tho' they have enough, yet they know not how, for all that they are not satisfied. Every Man is apt to think with himself, that could he but arrive to such an Estate, he should be easy and quiet, and should trouble himself no farther. But why should he think so? Does he not see others, who enjoy the very same Estate that he desires, and yet they are not satisfied? but still adding to it, and increasing

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sing it. And yet, perhaps, those very Persons, when in a mean, or in his Condition, had the very same Conceit and Thought too, if they cou'd but compass such an Estate, they should be happy: When no sooner had they compassed it, but the Case was quite alter'd, and they found they were in an Error, and perhaps too, were glad to find they were in an Error, and will make all amends they can, and soon rectify their Mistake. It is usually in the Case of Wealth, as it is in that of long Life: Tho' threescore and ten, or fourscore Years, are a very fair Allowance, and more than falls to a thousand, or ten thousand Men's Portion, and one would think might suffice any; yet when we are arriv'd to threescore and ten, or fourscore Years, we could wish a few more might be added; how few, or many, we are loth to say, but as many sure as possible. And were as many as possible added, and all concluded, we would be wishing them again repeated: So that had Men their Desire, there would hardly be any End either of their Life, or their Riches. 'Tis true, indeed (as was caution'd at first) in both these Cases, a good and pious Man may be contented with a Competency, and know when he has enough of Life, and when he has enough of Riches.

Riches; but then this Content proceeds from other and better Principles; and as he may reckon all beyond Threescore and ten, or Fourscore Years, to be Labour and Sorrow; so all beyond what is convenient, he may think to be Trouble and Distraction; as great a Burthen as Old Age, and would lay it down too as willingly; and never once groan or sigh, either at his own, or their Departure. Whereas the Lovers of this World, instead of dying thus easily, die the most violent and unnatural Death; are rack'd and tormented; like the poor wretched *Indians*, to surrender their Wealth and Treasures. A late *Indian* Author (as I remember) in his History of the *Inca's* of *Pera*, has rais'd this wise and weighty Question: "Whether (setting aside all the Miseries and Cruelties, those poor Heathens suffer'd from the more barbarous, unciviliz'd, and more heathen Christians) he asks; Whether the World were ever the better; nay, ever the richer for the Discovery of the *Indies*; and he denies it, and thus proves it; That the World is never the richer, but Wealth itself the poorer: That it has only lower'd the Value, and beat down the Price of Riches. For if one Talent before were as much as afterwards ten Talents, where was the Difference? What

V O L. II. H " did



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“ did ten Talents signify, but to take up  
 “ more room? Nor enlarged Mens Estates,  
 “ but only their Chests and their Coffers.”  
 And yet such is the Love of Wealth, so rest-  
 less and insatiable, that it wishes for more  
*Indies*, and is still making new Discoveries.  
 And like a Man that has found a Mine,  
 digs on apace with Gladness, and hopes  
 the Vein will either hold, or will bring him  
 to another.

II. THE next Reason the Wise Man  
 gives to shew the Folly and Vanity of those  
 who place their Happiness in Wealth and  
 Riches, is in the Verse next to the Text.  
*When Goods increase, they are increas'd  
 that eat them; and what Good is there to  
 the Owners thereof, saving the beholding  
 of them with their Eyes?* The Rich of  
 this World are usually divided into two  
 Sorts of People: The Needy and Cove-  
 tous, or the Liberal and Generous. As  
 to the first, to tell them that when their  
 Goods increase they are increas'd that eat  
 'em, is to make them distracted: 'Tis not  
 their Goods, but themselves are devour'd,  
 and torn piece-meal by their hungry Ser-  
 vants; and so little good to the Owners to  
 behold, that it is Death to their Eyes, but  
 to see the Waste and Consumption. And  
 as to those of a freer and more generous  
 Disposi-

# S E R M O N V. 99

Disposition, that can see their Goods increase, and those increas'd too that eat them, and can look on all the while not only with Content, but a secret Pride and Pleasure; their Vanity is as great as the other's Vexation. What good is all this to the Owners? What, but so much more Care and Trouble? I know indeed, there are some, and, God knows, too many, who think it the greatest Happiness in the World, and for which they would part with their Hopes of the other, to live high and great; and like the rich Man in the Gospel, *To wear fine Linnen and Purple, and to fare every day deliciously*: And think there is no Torment or Misery in this World, or the other, like the want of these Things. And yet there are some too, (tho' scarce one of a thousand; yet one of them wiser than a thousand) that would not live so, were they offer'd: And rather than be obliged to this Way of Living daily and continually, wou'd chuse to dwell with poor Hermits; and prefer the old *Spartan* Diet and Habit to all the new *Roman* Pride, or the old *Roman* Luxury. It may perhaps seem a Paradox, and yet I do not at all question, but any Man that is wise, might he be treated every day, and feasted like *Damocles*, with the richest Delicacies, and the choicest Varieties, tho'

never a Sword were hanging over his Head with the Point of it downwards, would desire to be removed, and be as glad too, as *Damocles*, to be taken away.

III. T H E next Reason I shall urge (for I have not time, nor is it necessary, to insist on every one, but only the more general and considerable) which the Wise Man here produces to shew the Folly and Vanity of those who place their Happiness in Wealth and Riches, is in the 13th Verse, and his own wise Observation; *There is, says he, a sore Evil which I have seen under the Sun, namely, Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.* In the former Reason he shews how little good they do their Owners; in this he shews, how they do them a great deal of Harm and Mischief. *Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.* Which Words are by Interpreters apply'd to several Purposes. That Riches are often the Occasion of Mens Ruin; exposing them to Envy, to false Accusations; to the Frauds and Violence of Thieves and Robbers, of Tyrants and Oppressors. And of this, tho' all History be full of Examples, yet none more than the *Roman*. Inſomuch, that *Plutarch* speaking of the Times of *Marius* and *Sylla*, and as much might be said too of most of the Emperors,

# S E R M O N V. 101

Emperors, tells us, " That whoever had  
 " a fair House, or large Gardens, or Hot  
 " Baths, he was sure to be proscribed;  
 " and laments the Misfortune of one *Quin-*  
 " *tus Aurelius*, an honest Man, and very  
 " quiet and peaceable, who going to the  
 " *Forum*, and reading the Proscriptions,  
 " and finding his own Name among 'em,  
 " cry'd, his Farm at *Alba* had accused and  
 " betray'd him, and procur'd his Destru-  
 " ction; and had no sooner said so, but  
 " was immediately assassinated." And he  
 adds, " That the Number of those that  
 " were destroy'd out of Hatred or Revenge,  
 " tho' it were great and dreadful, was no-  
 " thing to the Number of those that were  
 " slain for their Wealth and Riches." And  
 as Heathen *Rome* acted in the Civil State,  
 so it is very observable, that Christian *Rome*  
 has proceeded in the Ecclesiastical: And  
 has seldom prosecuted the Poor and Needy  
 for their false Doctrines, or heretical Opini-  
 ons; but the Rich and the Wealthy: These  
 are the Persons they proscribe; and give in  
 their Names to the holy Inquisition. 'Tis  
 not their Faith, which is nothing to the  
 Purpose, but their Wealth is erroneous.  
 For to holy Zeal, and infallible Avarice,  
 a great Estate is an unpardonable damna-  
 ble Heresy. And it is yet farther observa-  
 ble, that their Envy and Malice is chiefly



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levell'd against one sort of People. And it was not more common of old among the Heathens, *Christiani ad Leones*, the Christians to the Lions! than in After-ages, the *Jews* to the Inquisition. Where by strange Wild Beasts in the shapes of Men, and what is worse too, in the shapes of Priests and Confessors, they are as sure to be devour'd and torn in pieces.

A N D it is not only in this Sense, that Riches are often kept to the Hurt of their Owners, and create them Foreign Enemies; but as Interpreters observe, they many times make Enemies of their Servants and Domesticks; and a rich Man's Foes are often those of his own Household. It has been the Fortune of others, as well as of honest *Mephibosheth*, to be served by false and treacherous *Zibas*; that have accus'd 'em of Disaffection to the Prince and his Government. And have not only been rewarded for their Treachery with half the Land, but even with all the Inheritance. Nay, they farther observe, tho' it be hardly fit to mention, and were there not some Instances, could hardly be credited; that Riches have tempted even dear Friends and Relations, not only to wish for the Death of the Owners, but impatiently to hasten their End and Destruction. And  
not

not only *the Hired Servants, but the Heir himself has seized on the Lord, and cast him out of the Vineyard.* To all these Senses have Learned Men apply'd these Words here of *Solomon; Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.* There are other Senses, to which some have expounded them; but I do not think them so natural, and therefore shall not insist on them under this Particular, but reserve 'em to their proper Place; and proceed with *Solomon*, to consider the next Reason or Argument, to shew the Folly and Vanity of those who place their Happiness in Wealth and Riches, which he gives us in the 14th Verse.

IV. *BUT these Riches perish by evil Travail; and he begetteth a Son, and there is nothing in his Hand.* It is observable, that *Solomon* has given this Reason more than once, to shew the Vanity of Wealth and Riches: And he seems to have spoken it with a Spirit of Prophecy. For as never Man amassed more Riches together; so never did Riches *perish by more evil Travail*; by more sudden, shameful, and disastrous Calamities. What a glorious History have we of the Preparations that *Solomon* made for the Beautifying, and Adorning, and Enriching his new-built Temple of *Jerusalem!* not only *no Noise of Axes and Ham-*

mers, but nothing is heard of but Gold and Pure Gold. The House all within, and the Doors overlaid with Gold; and the Hinges of the Doors of Pure Gold: All the Vessels of the Temple, the Altar and the Table, the Lamps and the Candlesticks, the Bowls and the Snuffers; the Basons and the Spoons, and the Censurs of Gold: And not only the Vessels of the House of the Lord, but of the House of the King, were all of Pure Gold: None, or scarce any of Silver. It was nothing accounted of in the Days of Solomon; and yet in the Reign of his Son and Successor, and in the fifth Year of his Reign, came the King of Egypt, and carry'd away all this huge Mass of Treasure; and instead of the Golden Shields and Targets which Solomon made, his Son was forc'd to make Shields of Brass to be carry'd before him. Such a piteous Sight, as in After-ages, the Second was to those who had seen the First Temple; and yet that too was poor, and might have moved their Compassion, if compared with itself in the Days of King Solomon. And this it is thought drew from him these Expressions: *Then I hated all my Labour, which I had taken under the Sun; because I shou'd leave it to the Man that shall be after me: And who knows, whether he shall be a wise Man or a Fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my Labour, wherein I have labour'd;*

*labour'd; and wherein I have shewn myself  
wise under the Sun. This also is Vanity.*  
He almost thinks his own Folly as great as  
the Folly of his Son *Rehoboam*. And  
thus did all his Riches *perish by evil Tra-  
vail; and he begot a Son that had little, or  
nothing, in his Hand, or his Head; and  
ruin'd his Labour, and lost all his Wealth,  
and almost all his Dominions. And tho'  
no Man was ever so wise as Solomon; yet a  
thousand and a thousand have been as un-  
happy: Have heap'd up Riches, which  
they knew not who should gather, or who  
should scatter and squander 'em away:  
Have join'd House to House, and Land  
to Land; and call'd 'em by their own  
Names; which yet have been chang'd, and  
new ones impos'd; and they scarce remem-  
ber'd, or remember'd with pity: And  
were not an untimely Birth much better  
than the Name of a ruin'd and a miserable  
Family?*

V. B U T suppose, as the *Psalmist* speaks,  
a Man have Riches in possession, and leave  
the rest of his Substance to his Heirs; and  
that his *Dwelling-Place* too continue for  
ever; yet he can carry nothing away with  
him when he dies, nor shall his Pomp fol-  
low him; which is *Solomon's* last Argument  
in the 15th and 16th Verses of this Chapter.

A s



As he came forth of his Mother's Womb naked shall he return; so go as he came, and shall take nothing of his Labour, which he may carry away in his Hand. And this also is a sore Evil, that in all Points as he came, so shall he go; and *what Profit hath he that laboureth for the Wind?* That is, for Riches, as airy and empty, as inconstant and changeable, as swift and transitory; and that *make to themselves* as many and as strong *Wings* as the Wind too, and *fly away*: Or, as others will have it, *what Profit hath he that bath labour'd for the Wind, or Wealth and Riches?* Which when he has got, he is no more able to retain, than to hold the Wind in the Hollow of his Hand; which the faster he closeth, and thinks to grasp it the surer, slips the surer away.

'Twas a strange Opinion of some of the antient Heathens, (which yet had something in it that look'd like believing another Life after this, and a State of Immortality,) "That the Souls of the De-parted suffer'd all the Inconveniencies of Cold, Thirst, and Hunger, in their State of Separation." And according to this Opinion (tho' very foolish and absurd) they acted too, as they thought very prudently

dently and charitably ; and buried with their Dead all manner of Provisions, to serve 'em in the other World ; and good store of Wealth and Treasure, to furnish, if they needed, and supply their farther Occasions. However we despise such a strange Piece of Folly and Ignorance ; yet there are those who are wiser, and act a great deal more ridiculously, that hoard up all their Days, as tho' they were making Provision, not for the Flesh, but the Spirit ; and taking care how to live hereafter. They do not indeed bury their Wealth and Treasure in the Grave ; nor do they think of carrying it beyond, where they know it would be useless ; yet it is as useless now, and they enjoy it no more in this World than the other. There is not a greater Object of Folly and Pity than a rich Man a dying, and loth to part with his Riches. It is hard to determine which he resigns more unwillingly, with more Strivings and Strugglings, his Soul or his Estate. How does he sigh to think, all is just going ! and whilst he should be numbring his Sins and Transgressions, is recounting, and running over his Wealth and his Treasures ! and yet, to his Sorrow, those must go with him too, and these stay behind. It is a very moving Expression, that of the wise Son of *Syrach*, *O Death,*  
*how*

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*how bitter is the Remembrance of thee, to a Man that lives at rest in his Possessions! And if thy Remembrance be so bitter at a distance, how grievous is thy Presence, and the Sight of thee, how terrible! how dismal dost thou look, when thou comest to disturb the Man that lives at rest? To deprive him of his Wealth, and of all his Possessions? Here, O Death, is thy Sting; and here, O Grave, is thy Victory! So far are riches to a Man that has set his Heart on them, from making him happy, that when he has most need of it, they afford him no Comfort; so far from profiting in the Day of Wrath, that they add to his Wrath, and increase his Affliction. And a Camel might not only go through the Eye of a Needle more easily, than a rich Man, that trusts in his Riches, into the Kingdom of Heaven; but even more easily than he goes out of the World, tho' he do not go thither; So strait is the Way, and so narrow the Gate, so hard to find, and so much harder to enter, that leads the rich Man to Death and Destruction.*

AND thus I have endeavour'd, with Solomon's Arguments, to shew the Folly and Vanity of those who place their Happiness in Wealth and Riches. And yet I  
am

am not so vain, as to think what I have offer'd, or can offer on this Subject, shou'd convince 'em of their Folly. No, as long as they live, they will never believe, but that Wealth and Riches are the greatest Happiness. It may be so, they will not, and we talk yet to no Purpose: But tho' as long as they live, and I hope not quite so long neither, yet the Time will come, when they will be convinc'd, and repent of their Folly; and tho' they believ'd not the Preacher, will own it with Sighs and Tears to the Confessor.

FROM what has been said, I shall make some few useful and practical Inferences, and conclude this Discourse.

1<sup>st</sup>, If Wealth or Riches cannot make a Man happy, how great a Folly is it, as well as Impiety, to seek Wealth and Riches, by any base, unjust, and dishonest Practices? (If Riches, tho' never so fairly gotten, cannot make a Man happy; so, wickedly gotten, they will make a Man miserable.) And would to God, not only the little Retailers, and small Dealers of the World, would consider this seriously, but even the great Traders, the mighty Adventurers, the Buyers and Sellers of Crowns and Kingdoms. It can hardly  
enter



enter into the Heart of Man to conceive, that there should be such People as can betray their Country to false, foreign Interests, for little Sums of Gold, or for all the *Indies*. If it be Death but to sell one Person into Slavery, what do those Men deserve that can sell thousands and thousands into the worst of Slaveries, or the worst of Idolatries? *Balaam*, who stands on Record in Holy Scripture, and has long since receiv'd the Reward of his Covetousness, and the full Hire and Wages of his wicked Divinations, tho' the King of *Moab* sent him several Messengers, not privately, but openly, with great Gifts and Presents; and promis'd him, if he would come into the Land of *Moab*, to promote him to Honour, durst not (tho' *Balak* would have given him his House full of Silver and Gold) yet durst he not curse the People of God, or devote them, as a Prey and a Spoil to the *Moabites*. And what is the idle cursing of a wicked Prophet, to the selling of the People of God to their Enemies? They who thus greedily run after the Error of *Balaam*, and go beyond him, and even exceed the Madness of the Prophet, may justly expect such a Prophet's Reward; to have their last End like his, to be found among the Slain, and to die the Death of the Wicked.

# S E R M O N V. III

Wicked. The great, and wise, and just Prince of Poets, has read their Doom, and without Revelation, by the Light of Nature; has long since condemn'd them to infernal Torments; as he has it in his own easy and excellent way of Expression;

*Vendidit his auro Patriam, Dominumque  
Potentem*

*Imposuit.*

Not that *Aeneas* did ever really descend, or saw such Persons in Hell, as had sold their Country, and betray'd it to Tyrants; but the good Poet believ'd, and as sure as there was a Hell, that such Persons went thither. And would to Heaven, that some who call themselves Christians, in this, were but Heathens! and tho' they believed not the Scriptures, did believe yet the *Aeneids*. But, as our Saviour speaks on another Occasion, *We receive not, and we want not, the Testimony of Men*: Or, as St. John, *If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater*. And all these Relations are but Fables and Fictions, if compar'd with the Pains of eternal Damnation. And, as our Saviour says again, *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* How much less shall it profit him, to be false and treacherous, to serve the Designs of aspiring Usurpers, to betray his Country,  
and

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and lose his own Soul, and not to gain the World for himself, but another?

2dly, THE next Inference I shall make from this Discourse, is this: That if Wealth or Riches cannot make a Man happy, and we cannot procure them by fair and just Methods, in our lawful Callings, and by our honest Industry; we should endeavour, if possible, (and it is very possible) to be happy without them: Or, as the Apostle adviseth, *having Food and Raiment, be therewith content.* It is the greatest Weakness of Human Nature, in every Fortune, to chuse and take all the Evil, and refuse and leave all the Good, as tho' it were studying how to make itself miserable. In a rich Estate, and a plentiful Condition, instead of using it humbly and thankfully, and employing it in Works of Piety and Charity, abusing it to Pride, to Excess and Intemperance, to Sloth and Idleness, and all manner of Sensuality. In a mean Estate, and a poorer Condition, instead of enjoying the greatest Felicities, Health and Peace, and Quiet and Liberty, fretting and vexing, repining and murmuring; and grieving and afflicting our selves at others Prosperity. There is no one Subject which the ancient Philosophers, in their excellent Writings, have

# SERMON V. 113

have more commended and adorn'd, than a poor Condition : Not Wealth itself was ever so flatter'd, so courted, and admir'd, and almost envy'd, as Poverty. I do not mean in the Extremity; and yet take both in the Extremes, and perhaps too, the poorest Man in the World, is happier than the richest: But I mean only, as they did, a competent Subsistence, and without Superfluities. And he who is in such a State, has no more Reason to envy the richest Man alive, than *Cræsus*, who died above two thousand Years ago. In a word, this is certainly the safest Condition, the freest from Dangers, and from all Temptations to Sin and Vanity; and well were it for some Men, had this been their Condition, had they been placed in meaner and narrower Circumstances; how happy had they been, how virtuous, and how innocent! even happy, had they lain at their own Great Gates, like *Lazarus*, and had even wanted the Crumbs that fell from their Tables.

3dly, THE last Inference I shall make from this Discourse, shall be only in the Words of the Apostle to *Timothy*; to charge those who are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches : That they be rich in

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good



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*good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life. And I pray God, to every Man to whom he hath given Riches, or Power, or Wisdom, give Power, and Wisdom, and Grace, to use them all to his Service and Glory. To whom be all Honour, and Adoration, Thanksgiving and Obedience, now and for ever! The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.*





## SERMON VI.

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ECCLES. II. 16.

*There is no Remembrance of the Wise, more than of the Fool, for ever; seeing that which now is, in the Days to come shall all be forgotten.*



**W**HEN I enter'd upon this Book of *Solomon*, and discours'd on those Words, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*; I propos'd this Method: *First*, To shew the Imperfection of all worldly Happiness at large, and in general; and then proceed with *Solomon*, and descend to Particulars. In the examining of which, I have endeavour'd to shew, That Content or Happiness is neither to be found in Wisdom or Knowledge, in Mirth or Pleasure, in Wealth or Riches, in Greatness or Honour: That if we desire, if we mean

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to be happy, both here and hereafter, (and there is no being happy here in this World, without some very good Hopes of being happy hereafter in the other) we must take up with the wise Conclusion of *Solomon*, that is, to *fear God, and to keep his Commandments.*

BUT besides the main Subject, and chief Heads of his Discourse, the Preacher has, occasionally, inserted many other very useful Instructions; amongst the rest, this I have read, and which I design (God willing) for the Subject of our present Meditation: *There is no Remembrance of the Wise, more than of the Fool, for ever; seeing that which now is, in the Days to come, shall all be forgotten.*

AND I chuse to begin with this, because of the Affinity it seems to have with the other Pretences to Happiness: For as some few do place it in Wisdom or Knowledge, and many, too many, in Mirth and Pleasure; as some do seek it in Greatness and Honour, and almost all Men expect it in Wealth and Riches: So there are others of a more airy and refin'd Disposition, that despising these grosser Methods of Happiness, do place it in Fame and a lasting Reputation; and employ

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ploy not only their Wisdom and Knowledge, and deny themselves their Ease and Pleasure, and sacrifice not only their Honours and Estates, but their Lives themselves, to be renown'd to Posterity, or that their Names may endure throughout all Generations. But that this, as well as the rest, is also a Vanity, and oftentimes miscarries, we are assur'd by *Solomon* in the Words of the Text; *For there is no Remembrance of the Wise, more than of the Fool, for ever; seeing that which now is, in the Days to come, shall all be forgotten.* Only, before I proceed, I must needs here again premise the old Saying of *Aristotle*, which is now almost as well known as a Proverb of *Solomon*: That moral Sayings, or proverbial Aphorisms, if they are true for the most part, and do hold good in general, it is as much as is intended; and it is no Derogation to the Truth of them, that they admit of some few little Exceptions; as it is in the Case before us, not to instance in others. Tho' some Men have now been famous for many Ages, and may be so to the World's End, yet they are so few, in Comparison, to, all the World, in all Ages, that for one wise or good Man, that is either long, or for ever remember'd, there are Thousands and  
Thousands,



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Thousands, that are soon, or in Time are utterly forgotten.

I N speaking to this Subject, I shall observe this Method.

I. *First*, therefore, I shall allow, that it is very desirable to leave a good Name behind us, and is some kind of Happiness.

II. *Secondly*, I shall shew, that this is, however, but a very slight and slender kind of Happiness.

III. A N D, *Thirdly*, That were it more real and substantial, it is yet a most unsure, and uncertain Felicity.

A N D, *Lastly*, I shall conclude all with some useful Application.

F I R S T, then, It is allow'd to be very desirable to leave a good Name behind us, and is some kind of Happiness. Whether we are sensible of the Praise and Commendation that is given us after our Death, is a Doubt and Question which none of us can determine; nor is it worth the while, for any one to come from the Dead, to satisfy our little idle Curiosity. And tho'  
we

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we should be sensible, yet to take much Delight or Complacency in such a Knowledge, were a Fault and Vanity; and a modest good Spirit, like a modest good Man, would avoid the Opportunities, and fly away from hearing of his own Commendations. Besides, it is more credible, that the Spirits departed are too far remov'd, and in whatever Condition, have something else to do than listen to our Discourses; the Happy are above it, and a great deal better employ'd, and the Wretched are below it, and would take but little Pleasure in our Praise and Commendation; and perhaps too, for those Actions for which they are now justly and most miserably tormented. But be these Things as they will, tho' we should hear and know nothing of what was said or done in this World, after our Departure, yet it is plain and evident, even to Sense and Experience, that all Men, at least, of any Worth or Generosity, by a natural Instinct, perhaps by a divine, are desirous of leaving behind them a good Memory: Nay, not only the Greatest, but even the Meanest, that are not sunk into Brutes, have the same Inclination; and tho' not an honourable, yet among their few and poor Friends, to leave an honest Remembrance. And this Desire, whether of a

shorter and narrower, or of a larger, and more lasting Fame and Reputation, God seems to have implanted in the Souls of Men, to excite the greatest to brave, and noble, and heroick Attempts, and deter even the meanest from base, and dishonest, and infamous Practices. For tho' Men should not be Slaves to Fame, yet there is no Man alive that is either above, or below, a fair Reputation; and he who despises it, and cares not, nor values, what the World says of him when he is dead and gone, is even dead and gone already; like an heinous Malefactor, is immured, and even buried alive. It is indeed a good Caution, and has a great deal in it of Charity, not to speak ill of the Dead; and yet too, like Charity, it may be misplaced, and should sometimes be denied, and not granted promiscuously: For tho' it be a Sin to speak evil or falsely of the Dead, and more inhumane than to break open their Graves, or disturb their Ashes; yet it is none to speak evil, if true, of such Profligates, as deserv'd neither Christian, nor human Burial; such ought to be expos'd; and as it is no Injury to the Dead, it is a Justice we owe to the Living; the greatest Kindness and Charity; and may serve to discourage and deter them from following such wicked Examples:

ples: Or, if they will not be deterr'd, to let them know, however, what they must expect; in like manner to be scorn'd and abhorr'd of all Posterity. For when all is done, this is one of the greatest Prejudices and Discouragements to Vice, next to Hell and Damnation; and the greatest Encouragement to Goodness and Virtue, and the greatest Reward, next to Life and Immortality. And be we never so mild and candid in our Nature, be we never so merciful, and never so charitable, upon the account of Religion, yet we ought not, we cannot speak of all Men alike and indifferently. We meddle not with their Final State and Condition; their Souls are in God's Hands, and to be left to his Disposal; but their Names still are ours, and if they liv'd well, should be honour'd; and if they liv'd ill, openly and notoriously, ought to be scorn'd and detested. For there is no reason in the World, that a *Nero*, or a *Domitian*, should lye as quietly in their Graves, as a *Titus* or a *Trajan*. The Names of those should be set up like Sea-Marks, to warn others from Shipwreck; and of these, like Statues on a Road, to direct Strangers and Travellers, to point them the Way; by virtuous Actions, to point them the right Way to Fame and Glory. For this alone it was,  
that



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that some of the ancient Heathens perform'd such Wonders, as might almost be compar'd with the ancient *Jews*, tho' not with the ancient Christians. The Time would fail me to tell of *Cocles* and *Scævola*, of *Decius* and *Regulus*, of *Cato* and *Scipio*, who, through Hopes of Fame, and a Desire of Glory, waxed valiant in Fight, put to flight the Armies of Aliens, or Barbarians; not only subdued Kingdoms, but wrought Justice and Righteousness, quench'd the Violence of Fire, escaped the Edge of the Sword, nay, were even tormented, not accepting Deliverance: And all this to obtain (a better Resurrection? No, of that they knew nothing) but a lasting Name, and an honourable Memory; and this was all their Recompence, and this was all their sure and certain Immortality. 'Tis true, indeed, there was a Mixture in all their best Actions, of Pride and Vain-glory; and yet having no better Motives than either their own Honour, or the Honour of their Country; it is a little too severe (with the hard Father of Infants, and the harder Father of Heathens; that is, of the greatest Innocence, and the greatest Ignorance,) it is a little too severe, to call the Justice of *Aristides*, the Virtue of *Cato*, the Faith of *Regulus*, and all their other good Qualities,

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lities, only *splendida Peccata*, splendid Sins, and illustrious Offences; tho' some of them so splendid, as I doubt many Christians are hardly able to bear their Lustre. But set aside Human Frailty (if in them it were a Frailty, and if it were, it was a Frailty like their Courage, yet invincible :) But set aside Human Frailty, and a little Pride and Vanity; (which yet are hardly set aside, or separated from Human Nature :) But pardoning their Mistake, their main Actions were commendable; and directing them only to their true and proper Object, the Honour of God, deserve our Praise and Imitation. And if we make the End and Design of our Endeavours, the Glory of God, we have his own Word and Promise to secure our Success, and of gaining more Honour, than if we sought it never so industriously and directly. *He who honours me*, says God himself, *I will honour*; and he whom God honours, can never be lightly esteemed. Many are the Assurances to this Purpose, in holy Scripture: That *the Memory of the Just shall be blessed*; that *the Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance*; but that *the Name of the Wicked shall rot*: *The Light* (says the Wise Man) *of the Righteous rejoiceth*, burns brightly and pleasantly, *but the Lamp of the Wicked shall*

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*shall be put out*, and not only extinguish'd, but go out with a Stench, and the worst of ill Savours: And a *Good Name* is rather to be chosen *than great Riches*; is as hardly got, and often more honestly, and is usually a much more lasting and durable Inheritance. How many great Names have been famous whole Ages, whose Families are extinct, or lost and unknown, and their Heirs do now perhaps go a begging? I shall mention but one more, which cannot well be avoided, as lying before us in this Book; *A good Name is better than precious Ointment*; is more pleasing to the Soul than Perfume to the Senses, more grateful to the Mind, and more refreshing to the Spirits, almost able to revive a Man were he dying; and were he dead too, anoints, and consecrates, and embalms his Memory, beyond the richest Spices; not only preserves the Shape and the Form, but the Colours and Features, and make him look fair and alive to Posterity. The precious Ointment which *Mary* bestow'd on our Saviour, is said to have fill'd the House with the Odour; but the *Fame* of her pious and charitable Action, as our Saviour promis'd, has fill'd all the World, and spread as far as the Gospel, nor has yet lost of its

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its Virtue, but is still as fresh and fragrant as ever.

BUT, *Secondly*, Tho' a good Name, indeed, be very desirable, yet it is but a slight and slender kind of Happiness: So slight and slender, as can scarce be discern'd, and is hardly perceptible. Whatever Pleasure the Living may find, in talking of the Dead, yet the Dead are as little the better for their Talk, as the Living in *Europe*, for the Talk of those that are living in *Africk*. What Good would it do any Man here alive, at this very Hour, to be prais'd in the *Indies*? 'Tis possible he may be commended at a much less Distance, an hundred Miles off; yet what is he the wiser, and what is he the better for this Commendation? He knows no more of it than were he long since dead and buried, and lying in his Grave, in his deep Bed of Silence; *Where*, as *Job* expresses it, *the Weary are at rest*; and where *they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor or Flatterer*. The Truth is, the only Delight or Satisfaction the Persons themselves can find or imagine, in leaving behind them a good Name or Memory, is at best but a Pleasure in Hope and Expectation. By virtuous Deeds, and

3
worthy



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worthy good Actions, they hope to be remember'd, they expect that Posterity will at least be so civil and just to their Memories, as to speak well of them, to mention them fairly, and if not with Honour, yet at least with Respect : And yet all this is but an Happiness in reversion ; and if Men will have it, be they never so modest, they must have it upon trust, and take it up beforehand, and be forc'd to prevent and forestall their Happiness: Like Prodigals, must even anticipate their Revenue, and 'tis a thousand to one too, but they think themselves richer than they are, or ever will be, and take more than comes to their Share or Portion. For as in every Thing else, so in this, more especially, Men are apt to deceive themselves, or if they be not deceived, yet what is their Success, and what is their Advantage? at best, but a remote and a posthumous Happiness.

BUT *Thirdly*, Were it more real and substantial, more solid and sensible ; yet is it still an unsure and uncertain Felicity. *There is no Remembrance*, (says the wisest meer Man that ever lived, and almost the only wise Man of his Age, that is remember'd) *there is no Remembrance of the Wise, more than of the Fool for ever, seeing that*  
*which*

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*which now is, in the Days to come, shall all be forgotten.* There were, no doubt, many wise Men in *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, in the Reign of so wise a Prince as *Solomon*; and no doubt too, wise Persons in other Nations, ( besides the King of *Tyre* and the Queen of *Sheba* ) that never so much as heard of the Wisdom of *Solomon* : And yet the World knows no more of them, than they of the present Age, or the present of the wise Men in any future Generation. They are as much forgot, as tho' they had never been at all, and These as unknown, as tho' they should never have a Being. For we are not to imagine, there never were any Persons of great Worth and Goodness, of great Virtue and Excellence, but only such as have chanc'd to have been recorded in History. There may have been, and no doubt, were, in every Age and Nation, as there are at this Day, Men of great Worth and Excellence, of great Virtue and Piety, that have liv'd and dy'd obscurely, and never were, nor desir'd ever, to be known to Posterity ; that pleas'd themselves, and were abundantly satisfy'd in doing their Duty, in the Exercise of an humble and a private Virtue, and not only pleas'd themselves too, but pleas'd God Almighty. And I do not at all question, but the Number of  
These

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These is much greater than of Those who have been famous and eminent. If They indeed, like the great Lights of Heaven, have shone brighter; yet These, it is to be hoped, like the less Stars, are innumerable. And tho' they differ here, yet hereafter they may not *differ*, altogether so much *in Glory*: They who had pray'd to God, and *serv'd him in secret*, *shall be openly rewarded*; and not only rewarded for their Service and Piety, but their Secrecy and Humility. How many of those anti-ent Hermits and Anchorets, (not such as out of Vanity or Superstition, have retir'd into the Desarts, and left the World only to draw the World after them, with more Admiration;) but those Hermits and Anchorets, that in the Heat of Persecution have been driven into the Desarts, and wander'd about in Dens and Caves of the Earth, and there spent their Lives, and breathed out their Souls in Prayer and Devotion; how many of those are now known? Of whom the World then was not worthy, nor ever since worthy of their Names and Memories. And tho' we have a long Roll of Martyrs and Confessors, yet how few in comparison of those vast Multitudes that have been slaughter'd and massacred? Were they known, we need not, with the Church of *Rome*, make a Saint or  
Martyr

Martyr of the Calendar itself; were they known, they were known not only for every Day, but every Hour in the Calendar. And I do not at all question, but even at this present Time, there are many good Persons, many pious good Persons, and excellent Christians, that are not, nor will be known, till the General Resurrection: And of those that are known, how short is the Remembrance? how soon are they forgotten? Perhaps, at their Departure, grievously bemoan'd, passionately desir'd, exceedingly beloved, wonderfully commended, their Virtues recited, and even prais'd and extoll'd, as high as the Place, to which their Souls are departed; but in a very little while, in a very short Season, in a Moment almost, if compared with Eternity, all is quite lost, all for ever forgotten; mention'd perhaps, and now and then (too) commended by those who knew, and were acquainted with their excellent Qualities, but in time, both those who knew and commended, and those who heard them commended, are all pass'd away, and they are talk'd of no longer; their Names and Memories are at length in perfect Peace and Quiet; no more *tossed to and fro*, nor *carry'd about with every Breath or Wind*, and those often (too) contrary, of Popular Applause, or of Popular

VOL. II. K Censure;



Censure; but buried in the calmest, profoundest Silence; their very Names are at rest, and securer of Rest than their Dust and Ashes. The Names, indeed, of some few, may perhaps be preserv'd on their Tombs and Sepulchres, and the Names of some fewer in their own more lasting Works and Monuments; and yet, their Tombs too moulder, and their Works too decay, and both are soon cover'd with Dust, and both hard to be read, and both very little regarded. Nor is this the Fate only of Tombs and Sepulchres, but of Shrines and Altars; and those who have been canoniz'd and sainted in one Age, and religiously adored; in another have scarce been religiously mention'd; and their Shrines and Altars, like *the Tables of the Money-Changers*, (and such too they were, and really no better) *thrown down*, and overturn'd, *and cast out of the Temple*. Who that had lived some Ages ago, and had seen the mighty Respect and Veneration that was paid to a Person, of no very Blessed Memory, (for tho' Rebellion was never so high, and Loyalty never at so low an Ebb; yet it is not so low, as to make a Saint of a Rebel; and whose chief Merit or Pretence to Saintship was his Pride, and opposing his Prince; and the only Miracle ever wrought at his Tomb, was his Prince's

Submis-

# SERMON VI. 131

Submission;) but who that had seen the mighty Veneration that was paid him, at least two Ages together, could have ever believ'd, that his Name and Memory should in time be despised, and at length be detested? And yet how did the World come flocking in Multitudes, and even laid aside their Crusadoes, and left the holy Land, to come hither in Pilgrimage? and thought it no less pious and meritorious, to visit his Tomb, than the fam'd holy Sepulchre? one would think even more: For, as a learned Historian assures us, from very good and unquestionable Authority, he had one Year vast Offerings, when our Saviour had nothing. And yet how is since the proud *Lucifer* fallen, and our Lord restor'd to his just Rights and Honours! who has now all the Prayers, and Vows, and Oblations; and the Saint (for so a wise Church will still call him, and perhaps other wise People) but the Saint, such as he is, and as he deserves too, has nothing: And yet to have foretold this mighty Alteration in that Age, would have been thought Prophaneness or Blasphemy. And God only knows too, in such a World of Vicissitudes, whether for our Sins and grievous Provocations, he may not yet again be restor'd to his Honour, and Men dragg'd to his Tomb, and

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compell'd to worship, or, upon their Refusal, be made much better Martyrs; which yet I hope too, they may not, and pray God to prevent.

I SHALL now conclude what has been said on this Subject, and enforce it. Since *there is no Remembrance of the Wise, more than of the Fool for ever; and seeing that which now is, in the Days to come, shall all be forgotten;* let us lay aside our vain Hopes, and fond Imaginations, of perpetuating our Names, and eternizing our Memories; seek true Honour and Glory, and the only true Immortality: Of That, after all our Pains and Endeavours, we may fail and miscarry; but of This we can never, by the Grace of God, be deceiv'd or disappointed. That we may lose, tho' we had never so well deserv'd; and yet This we shall enjoy, tho' we never could merit. Who would trouble his Head to be talk'd of alive? or to be talk'd of, perhaps, when his Head is cold, and freed from all such Care and Trouble? Who would spend all his Time, his Pains, and Labour, for that which is not? or for a Thing so uncertain? Nay, in so divided a World, for a Thing so impossible? When, if he chance to be commended or extoll'd by some, he is as surely by others, and

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and often too for that very Reason, decry'd and disparag'd. Heretofore, indeed, when there was a little more Honesty in the World, and a great deal less Interest, when Men were modest and humble, and quiet and peaceable; (and such happy Days, till our unnatural Divisions, did our good Fathers see, tho' God knows whether we shall ever see them again) a Man might then have lived, and have died, and have gone to his Grave in Peace and Quiet, and all the World would have agreed in his Character; And there goes, or there lies, an honest good Man, would have easily been given him by all, for his Epitaph. But in such a World of fierce Animosities, a Man can but be the Saint, or Hero, of a Party; by others he shall be loaded with Names and Titles as are not fit to be mention'd: But if he chance to be more mild or moderate, he is then like Salt that has lost his Saltness, (and yet his Saltness he had rather lose than his Charity;) but he is then like Salt that has lost his Savour, and is cast out, and is trod under foot of all People. Who then would trouble his Head about a Business so doubtful and difficult? when with the same, and perhaps with less Pains and Labour, he may without Question, or Dispute, or Controversy, he may



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for certain be happy to all Eternity. The Funeral Orations, the flattering Panegyrics that are made at our Deaths, are not all to be compared with that little Sentence, that short Speech of God, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant*. To be prais'd all our Life, to be prais'd, were it possible, by all the World at our Death, is nothing in comparison of being commended by God at the general Resurrection. Oh how happy is he! he is even happy already, that shall hear that blessed Speech then pronounc'd, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*. To which happy Speech, and unspeakable Joy, God in his Mercy bring us all for Christ Jesus Sake: *To whom, with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.*





## SERMON VII.

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ECCLES. XII. 13.

*Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter ; Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.*



HAVING follow'd the wise Author of this Discourse thro' all the Paths he has led us in search of Happiness; thro' the rough and difficult, and intricate Ways of Knowledge; thro' the smooth and easy, and soft Paths of Pleasure; over the steepy and dangerous Ascents of Honour; and thro' the fair and tempting, the most likely and promising, and that united all the other Ways, of Wealth and Riches; he has brought us at length, as God led his own People, to the Place where we would be, to the Land of Canaan, the Place of Rest and Happiness.  
*Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Mat-*  
K 4 *ter ;*

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*ter; Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man; or this is the Whole of Man: For this he was made, and for this he was design'd; this is his Business, and this is his Happiness.*

WITHOUT any more nice or critical Remarks on the Words themselves; I shall proceed directly to confirm the Truth of this plain Proposition; That there is no Happiness in the World, no greater, and no other, but to *fear, and serve, God, and to keep his Commandments.* This may seem, perhaps, strange; but so it is, and God be thanked it is so, and that there is no other way of being happy.

IN speaking to this Subject, I shall consider it more especially with respect to all the other Pretences to Happiness; Wisdom and Pleasure, and Riches and Honour; and hope to make it appear, that Piety or Religion, to *fear, and serve, God, and to keep his Commandments,* is the best and truest Wisdom, the purest and sincerest Pleasure, of more Worth and Value, of more Esteem and Reputation, than Wealth and Riches, or Greatness and Honour.

T H A T

## S E R M O N VII. 137

THAT without this, none of Those, nor all of them together, but with or without them, This alone can make us happy.

I. I BEGIN with the *First*, That Piety or Religion, to *Fear God, and to keep his Commandments*; is the best and truest Wisdom: It is not only the Beginning, but the End and Height of Wisdom, and the Perfection of Understanding; compar'd with this, all the Science in the World, is but empty Speculation; this only is solid, and this alone is satisfactory. *I see (says David) that all Things come to an end, and to a poor and sad End, very pitiful and deplorable: But thy Commandment is exceeding broad; not only fills, but enlarges our Capacities, lengthens and heightens, it both extends and exalts the Understanding.*

THE Object of this Knowledge is certainly the most Excellent. For what more deservedly can employ our Studies and Meditations, than the Nature of God, his Attributes and Perfections? It is the Study of Angels, and their constant Meditation; and the more they study, and the more they meditate, the more Wonders they descry,



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descry, and discover new Excellencies, and will discover more and more to all Eternity.

AND as in itself it is Excellent, so is it, if possible, as Useful and Beneficial. It transforms us into the Image of that God whom we serve, and whose Commands we obey: It gives us a new Make, a new Frame of Spirit, a new Soul and Body, other Senses and Appetites, other Hopes and Desires, and quite other Passions and Affections. For look, how far the East is from the West; and look, how distant the Heaven is from the Earth, so far is it remov'd from *the Wisdom of this World*; so far is it above, and yet farther exalted, It employs not our Thoughts in vain little Trifles, that do hardly concern us, or concern us but a Moment; but in Matters of the greatest and eternal Consequence; not what we shall eat, nor what we shall drink, nor wherewithal we shall be cloathed; things, in comparision, beneath our Care, and scarce worth the considering. It does not take Thought for to-morrow, but for ever. The Wisdom of the World may (I conceive) be divided into these two Generals; Learning or Science, and Prudence or Policy, and both in their kind very useful and excellent: And yet had we

# S E R M O N VII. 139

the Knowledge of all Arts and Sciences, did not only understand and comprehend all Myſteries, but could expreſs our Notions, and adorn our Conceptions, not only with the Tongues of Men, but of Angels; and yet were deſtitute of true Virtue and Piety, had no Fear of God, and no Senſe of Religion, we were but in the Opinion of wiſe Men and Angels, *as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal*; and while we made a Noiſe with our great Parts and Underſtandings, deſerve to be pity'd; and if proud, to be even deſpiſed for our Ignorance. And ſo in the other Caſe of Prudence or Policy; were we verſ'd in all the Arts and Myſteries of Government, could rule a State, and turn and wind, and manage whole Nations; and as others by their Faith would remove Mountains, by our Want, or Breach of it, by our Falſhood or Treachery could remove and tranſlate even Kingdoms and Empires, and beſtow and give 'em to whomſoever we pleaſed, or keep them ourſelves; yet were all this Policy, without the Fear of God, and a Senſe of Religion, no better than the Folly and Madneſs of *Achitophel*: And inſtead of making others, we might do wiſer and better to make our own Wills, and ſet our Houſes in order. For tho' in the Eyes of thoſe Stateſmen and Politicians, there is nothing

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nothing now more wretched and contemptible, there will nothing one Day be greater or more admirable than a poor honest Christian. But farther, as this Wisdom is of all the most Excellent, and of all the most Useful, and the most Beneficial; so is it, (what is stranger, and a great Commendation) of all the most Easy; a Knowledge acquir'd with the least Pains, or the greatest Facility. What plainer or more level to the meanest Capacities, than to *fear God, and to keep his Commandments?* He that runs may read, and not only read as he runs, but understand. Such a High Road (to use the Prophet's Expression) as *wayfaring Men*, mere Strangers or Travellers, can *hardly err therein*, or mistake it through Ignorance. What Depth of Parts, or great Learning, is requir'd only to fear God? And he that does truly fear God, there is no Fear or Doubt but he will keep his Commandments; which, as they are not grievous or hard to be observ'd, so much less are they grievous, or hard to be understood. I do not at all question, but with half the Study, with half the Pains and Industry, that Men learn any other Art or Science, nay, even any other common Profession, they might learn all Things necessary in Religion, all that is needful to their Soul's Health,

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Health, and their eternal Salvation. And as for all other Things, I shall dare venture to answer, they are not undone if they do not understand. The most ordinary People, either do, or easily may know enough to carry 'em to Heaven; and he that knows most, can (I am sure) go no farther: Nay, it is not only a Knowledge very easily obtain'd, but hardly avoided. Men are born and created with the Fear of God, and a Sense of their Duty; and it costs them a thousand times more Pains and Labour to efface, than improve and to perfect this Knowledge. They cannot be rid of it, were they never so willing; would they never so fain, they cannot shift it off with all their Endeavours. Knowledge they cannot miss, and are not able to evade, with all their Ignorance, nor with all their Philosophy. *It is not,* as the Prophet speaks, *either hid or afar off*; it is neither in Heaven above, nor in the Earth beneath, nor beyond the Seas, that they should ask or enquire, who will go up into Heaven, or down into the Deep, or over the Seas, and bring it home to us, that we may know it, and do it? It is nigh 'em, and within 'em, in their Mouths, and in their Hearts, to know it, and do it. And were it in their Hearts but



but to do it, they might know it too, easily.

AND as it is a Knowledge the most Worthy and Excellent, the most Useful and Beneficial, and of all the most Easy, so is it of all the most absolutely Necessary. We cannot be without it, unless we are contented to be undone, and are fully resolv'd to be miserable. Whatever other Knowledge we may affect or pursue, tho' of the greatest Esteem, and of the greatest Advantage to ourselves and Mankind; yet if this be neglected, it is all but lost Labour, and we deserve, with the Sluggard, to be sent to the Ant to learn Wisdom and Instruction; when instead of laying up Corn in Harvest, we have hoarded up nothing but Chaff against Winter, a long and dead Winter, a dark and dismal Eternity. And however now we take it in Disdain, and are angry to be told of our Error and Folly, shall then own our Mistake, and despise ourselves more than we were ever admir'd, than we even despised those that told us of our Folly; shall wish a thousand times, instead of filling our Heads with learned Criticisms, or Politick Notions, or philosophical Speculations; instead of employing our Thoughts and Invention on the Heights of Wit, or the Depths

# SERMON VII. 143

Depths of Wisdom; we had plainly and honestly, simply and sincerely, made it our Business, our Morning Exercise, our diurnal Study, our nocturnal Lucubration, to know and serve God, and to keep his Commandments: This will recommend and prefer us before the subtlest Statesmen, the wisest Philosophers, the learned'st Clerks, and the profoundest Divines. Without this, all Science whatsoever, is falsely so called, is Error or Ignorance, is nothing to the Purpose, is quite besides the Question; and be we never so intent, and knit our Brows never so hard, either with Study or Anger, yet take it how we will, is all trifling Impertinence. And the greatest Scholar, and the greatest Philosopher, and he who (perhaps) despises them both, the greatest Politician; and he who (perhaps too) despises them all, the greatest Wit that ever was in the World, without God and Religion, will wish he had been born a Fool and an Idiot. So true will all Men find that of the Psalmist, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, a good Understanding have all they, and only they, who do thereafter*, and the Praise and the Comfort of it will endure too for ever.

BUT

BUT *Secondly*, As to fear God, and to keep his Commandments, is the best and truest Wisdom, so is it the purest and sincerest Pleasure. It is indeed a Pleasure too great for this World, were it not allay'd, and check'd, and chastis'd with Human Infirmities. Could we live like *Enoch*, and walk with God, and be perfect, we should almost be ravish'd with Joy, and translated. The Miracle, vouchsafed the great Apostle, of being caught up to Heaven, would be common and frequent; we should be even transported thither with Extasies, should be caught up with the Lord, and be with him continually! Nay, even as it is, and with all these Weights about it, it is yet able to raise us above this World, and all these sorry Delights. The very Fear of God, to one who sincerely endeavours to serve him, and keep his Commandments, is itself a Pleasure; a Fear, like Love, that has nothing in it of Torment, is all gay and chearful, that overcomes and casts out all other Fear; for he fears nothing else, that fears God Almighty. What are the Frowns of the World to him who enjoys the Favour of God, and the Light of his Countenance? Or all this World's Threatnings, to his great, and precious, and glorious Promises?

fes? the Pains of Death, to a blessed Immortality? the Delights of Sense, or the Pleasures of Appetite, to the Feast of a quiet and innocent Conscience? This is, indeed (to use *Solomon's* Expression) a *continual Feast*; or rather, indeed, not a Feast, but a Sacrifice; tho' not so vast and expensive, yet as holy and acceptable, as that he offer'd himself at the Dedication of the Temple.

THERE is something in all Sorts of worldly Pleasure, that sowres and embitters it. If it be also a Feast, it is yet to be eaten with bitter Herbs, and unleavened Bread, with our Shoes on our Feet, and our Staff in our Hand, as tho' we were in haste, and ready to depart; and we (or our Feast) are soon taken away; or could we sit longer, and were even permitted to indulge our Appetite, we should either be weary and tir'd, or surfeited; cloy'd we might be, but should never be satisfied. But in serving God, and in keeping his Commandments, there is nothing of all this, nor any thing else, to take off the Pleasure; it is pure, and sincere, without any Mixture of Trouble or Regret; we are neither afraid before, nor after suspicious; a Pleasure that will bear the Test, and endure to be consider'd; we



may look to the End of it, and the more we examine, the more we approve: A Delight like that of a fair And large Prospect, all pleasant below, and above all glorious, and all around Earth and Heaven meeting together: And yet, could we get to the utmost Limits of the present Prospect, we should meet with another as pleasant and glorious.

THERE is this in a Life of Virtue and Piety, which no Pleasure can boast, that it is ever increasing; from Childhood to Youth, from Youth to Manhood, from Manhood to old Age, it is growing and improving. And whereas all other Delights or Diversions, we change with our Years; and what in Childhood we fancy'd, in Youth we neglect; and what in Youth we affected, in Manhood we despise; and what even our wise Manhood courted and admired, our wiser old Age despises and pities; despises no less than the Follies of Childhood: This is a Pleasure that is lasting and constant, that will never forsake us, that we shall never disrelish, will always accompany and go along with us through every Stage and Period of our Lives; our tender Childhood, and make it harmless and innocent; our sprightly Youth, and make it sober and temperate; even

even our wise Manhood, and make it wise to Salvation; nay, our decrepit old Age, and make it all easy, the best part of our Life, and of all the most comfortable. Nay, farther, will never leave us in the Hour of our Death, in our greatest Extremity; will keep close to us to the very last Moment, and, like a faithful Friend too, then closer than ever. When even the Memory of all our other Pleasures, will either abandon us, or only disquiet, or grieve and torment us, This will cheer and refresh, will raise our sinking, and confirm our trembling, and revive our departing and dying Spirits. We shall hardly know which is the greater Pleasure, to look forwards or backwards? The Reflection on a pious Life, or the Prospect of Happiness? We shall feel more Joy in our very last Agonies, even in that one Moment, than in a whole Life of Pleasure.

BUT, *Thirdly*, As to fear God, is the best and truest Wisdom; and the greatest Pleasure in the World, to keep his Commandments: (for what greater Pleasure than to please God Almighty?) So is the sincere Practice of Piety and Religion, (at least in the Opinion of all wise and good Men) of more Worth and Value, of more Esteem and Reputation, than Wealth and

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Greatness, or Riches and Honour. Nay, I might add, not only in the Opinion of the Wise and the Good, but of the Foolish and Profligate. That Virtue is of more Esteem than Wealth or Greatness, even in the Opinion of the Rich and Honourable. So great a Regard has God ever express'd for Virtue or Piety, that wherever it appears, tho' in the meanest Garb, it is rever'd and respected; he has stamp'd upon it such an indelible Character, as no Misfortune, no Want or Poverty, no Affliction or Misery, no Malice or Envy, can ever deface. Like an unhappy Prince, in poor homely Disguise, it carries with it still an Air of Majesty, or, what is more venerable, of Content and Humility: Or if a vain, ignorant, and ill-natur'd World will not know it, however it knows itself, and is satisfied, is conscious of its high Birth, and sacred Extraction, that it was born to a Crown, and which, sooner or later, it will receive and inherit. This is the Happiness of Piety and Religion, which no Riches can purchase, no Honour bestow, no Power confer, which all the World cannot give, nor can take away.

O H A P P Y Man! were it lawful to envy another's Felicity, we should neither envy the Rich his Wealth, nor the Great  
his

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his Honour, nor the Wise his Knowledge, nor the Vain his Pleasure; could we lawfully covet, could we honestly desire, could we innocently envy the Good of another, we should envy nothing but his Virtue and Piety: For say what we will, even in the Rich when good, and in the Great when pious, it is their Goodness and Piety that we most love and admire: And were we as holy, as devout, and religious, had we their good Qualities, we should leave their Estates, and their Titles of Honour, to them or to others; to others that admire 'em, or to them who perhaps do value 'em no more than we do ourselves. So true should we find those Sayings of the holy Psalmist, and should say them too, after him, with like Truth and Sincerity, *Lord, what Love have I unto thy Law? all the Day long is my Study in it. I have as great Delight in thy Commandments, as in all manner of Riches. I am as glad of thy Word, as one that findeth great Spoils. I love thy Commandments above Gold, and precious Stone: And the Law of thy Mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of Gold and Silver.*

AND thus I have endeavoured to prove and illustrate what *Solomon* here asserts, That Content or Happiness is neither to



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be found in Wisdom or Knowledge, in Mirth or Pleasure, in Wealth or Riches, in Greatness or Honour; that if we desire, if we expect to be happy, if we mean not to be wretched both here and hereafter, we have no other Way, there is no other Remedy, but to take up this wise Conclusion of *Solomon*; and not only to hear it, or to grant and acknowledge, but apply it, and resolve to put it in practice; *To fear and serve God, and to keep his Commandments.* And then, whatever is our State or Condition in this World, whether we are wise or knowing, or weak and ignorant, pleas'd and delighted, or griev'd and afflicted, rich or poor, great or contemptible, we are sure to be happy both here and hereafter. To conclude, If there be no Content or Felicity, but only in a Course of Virtue and Religion, why should any one neglect or decline his Happiness, or defer it one Day, one Hour, one Moment? Foolish is he! but he sure is desperate, and may be so in the Issue, as well as in the Venture, that defers it to the very last Hour and Moment. Could we even be happy then, yet who, by delaying to serve God, and to keep his Commandments, would chuse to be wretched all his Life, and perhaps too, and it is more than a perhaps, to be wretched

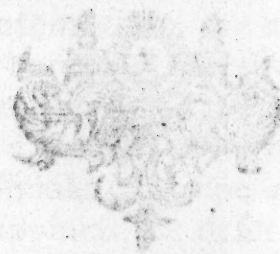
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wretched for ever? May we consider what has been said, and God give us a right Understanding in all Things: To whom be all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Obedience, now and for ever. If we know these Things, happy shall we be if we do them; which that we may, *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.*



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wretched for ever? May we consider what  
has been said, and God give us light  
in all things: To whom  
be all honour and glory, Adoration and  
obedience now and for ever. If we know  
the things, happy shall we be, we do  
know, which that we may, the things  
of God, and the things of the world,  
and the things of the flesh, Amen.



S E R M O N VII 151



## SERMON VIII.

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### ECCLES. XII. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth; while the evil Days come not, nor the Tears draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.*



**A**MONG all the Evils under the Sun, all the Follies and Vanities of Human Kind, all their miserable Mistakes in the Pursuit of Happiness, there is not a greater or a more unaccountable, than that of neglecting and delaying their Repentance, of forgetting their Creator in the Days of their Youth, and thinking to remember him in the time of old Age, when all Things are almost forgotten. And whereas every other Folly and Vanity have their proper Object, this runs through them all, and universally prevails; and the Lovers and Admirers



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Admirers of Mirth and Pleasure, of Wealth and Riches, of Greatness and Honour, and even of Wisdom and Knowledge, do all agree in this, and unanimously resolve to delay their Repentance as long as is possible, and longer, almost, than is possible to repent. The Royal Preacher, in this latter part of his Sermon, has given us, tho' an elegant, yet a melancholy Description of old Age; which, as it ought to be consider'd even by those that are farthest, and at the greatest Distance; so especially by those that are come within Prospect, and are just on the Confines of that cold and dark Country; a desolate Place, and but poorly inhabited, and with Objects of Misery; a barren dry Land, where no Water is, no Refreshment or Comfort but what we bring thither, and carry along with us in our former good Actions.

I INTEND therefore, from these Words of Solomon, to lay before you the Folly, the wond'rous great Folly, of delaying our Repentance, till those *evil Days come, and those Years draw nigh, when we shall find no Pleasure in them*, nor in any thing else, and (if we have lived ill) to be sure, least of all, in the Duties of Religion.

AND

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AND this I shall endeavour, from the following Considerations,

I. THE Loss, or great Decay, of our natural Faculties.

II. THE Weakness of our Understandings.

III. THE Frailty of our Memories.

IV. THE Perverseness of our Wills:  
To which I shall add,

V. THE Pains and Distempers:

VI. THE Cares and Troubles:

VII. THE Sorrows and Afflictions, that usually attend old Age:

AND, *Last* of all, (and worst of all) the grievous Reflection on a long Life of Wickedness.

AND these, I hope, by the Grace of God, may be sufficient to dissuade us from delaying so necessary a Work, as that of our Repentance, till the Time of old Age, the very worst Time of our Life for repenting.

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penting. Amend our Lives we cannot, they are past and gone, and we can now no more reform, than recall our Youth and Manhood: All we can do (besides being sorry, and that too, poorly and weakly) is, I doubt, very little; and to an accustom'd Sinner, as little as it is, is (I doubt) more difficult; as will plainly appear, by examining the foresaid Considerations.

I BEGIN with the *First*; The Loss or great Decay of our natural Faculties. All which, tho' we have perverted and abused to Sin and Wickedness, were given us for other Purposes, and design'd for the Service of Virtue and Religion. I confess, indeed, as most of our general Observations do admit of some Exceptions; there may be some Examples, some very few Instances, of Persons that have arriv'd to a good old Age, with all their Senses and Faculties, with a sound Mind, and a clear Apprehension, with a great deal of Spirit, and Vigor, and Vivacity. But as these are rare, so it is easy to observe, they are most commonly Persons of a sober, regular, and virtuous Conversation, that have not drown'd their Parts in Vice and Sensuality, but improv'd them by Diligence, and a constant Industry. These  
(as

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(as the *Psalmist* speaks) are like Trees planted by the Water-side, whose Leaves never fall, or fade and wither, but always prosper, and are always flourishing, and ever bring forth their Fruit in due Season, the Fruit that is proper and fit for the Season. But as for the Ungodly, it is not so with them, they are like the Chaff which the Wind scatters away from the Face of the Earth. As they seldom live out half their Days, so they often (what is worse) out-live their Parts and Understandings; or if they have any left them, they are commonly so depraved, they can no more bring 'em to any thing of Religion, than raise their stooping and crooked Bodies, or make 'em straight and erect. The Frame of their Minds, and the very Bent of their Souls, are downwards to the Earth, and to lift themselves upwards, is a Pain, and they cannot long endure such a Violence. Or if any of the Virtuous, by Temperance and Sobriety, or any of the Vicious, by a strong and happy Constitution, do arrive (as the *Psalmist* speaks) to fourscore Years, *yet is their Strength then*, even the Strength of them both, *but Labour and Sorrow*. Tho' some may retain all their Senses and Faculties a little longer than others, yet old Age will as certainly impair them,



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as the Grave will reduce the healthiest, the fairest, and the strongest Bodies, to Dust and Ashes. And is this a fit Time, and (as we seem to imagine, by deferring it till then) the fittest Time of our Life, for Repentance? *When, (as Solomon speaks) the Sun and the Moon, and the Stars, are darken'd; when all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls, have not only lost their Light, and Lustre, but their Heat and Vigor, and all manner of Influence: When the Keepers of the House tremble, and the strong Men bow themselves, when those that look out of the Windows are darken'd, and all the Daughters of Musick are brought low; when, like Idols, we have Ears and hear not, and Eyes and see not, and Hands and handle not, and Feet and walk not; our Senses decay'd; when we are fit for little, and good for nothing, are we then fittest for the Service of God, and good enough for Religion? Were there nothing in Old Age but Weakness and Weariness, and Dulness and Heaviness, it were enough to discourage us from delaying our Repentance, that deserves and requires our warmest, and strongest Affections, from delaying it till we have hardly any Warmth or Strength, or Passion or Affection; and if we repent, do repent from dead Works, with as dead a Repentance.*

II. ANO-

II. ANOTHER Consideration that may serve to dissuade us from delaying our Repentance, till the Time of old Age, is the Weakness of our Understandings. I do not mean as to temporal and worldly Affairs, those we may perhaps understand well enough, and yet not those too always so clearly and readily, but may be apt to commit Mistakes and Oversights in the commonest Matters: But the Weakness of our Capacities to apprehend and discern the Things that are spiritual, and to be spiritually discern'd: When the Minds of Men are not only clouded and darken'd, but possess'd with different and quite contrary Notions, it will be no easy Matter to bring them to understand the first Principles of Religion, which they have scarce ever heard, or have never consider'd; or perhaps have made it the whole Business and Study of their Lives to baffle, to efface and eradicate, that they might go on in their Sins with more Peace and Security. It is a piteous Sight, and not very unusual, to observe such Persons as have lived all their Days in a careless Ignorance, or a more careless Neglect and Disuse of Religion, how little they relish any pious Discourse, how coldly they are affected; they gaze and they stare, it is all an Amusement

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usement to them, and almost unintelligible: They have been, all their Lifetime, otherwise employ'd; their Heads and their Hearts have continually been running upon quite other Business, and they hear what you say, and retain it as little, as a Man scarce awake, or just falling asleep.

III. ANOTHER Consideration that may serve yet farther, to dissuade us from neglecting and delaying our Repentance till the time of Old Age, is the Frailty of our Memories. The great *Roman* Orator, (whom I may often have occasion to mention) in his excellent Discourse on this Subject, has endeavour'd to prove that old Men are not altogether so forgetful as is commonly imagin'd. But he does it by such Arguments, as prove indeed rather the Weakness of his Cause, than the Strength of his Eloquence: *Omnia quæ curant, meminert.* All Things, says he, which old Men do mind or regard, and for which they are much concerned, they very well remember, as their Bonds, and their Debts, and the just Days of Payment. *Nec quenquam senum novi oblitum,* &c. Nor, says he, have I ever known any old Man forget where he had hid his Gold, or had buried his Treasure. A  
mighty

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mighty Instance of an old Man's Memory! And as great a Man as he was, not I think much to the Honour of his own Memory. And what wonder is it, if they retain the Notice of those Things, and those but a few Things, on which they are musing continually? are thinking all Day, and dreaming all Night; or not dreaming, but often not sleeping all Night too for thinking? 'Twould be a greater Wonder, if they should lose the Remembrance of their Hoards and Treasures, than the Treasures themselves, without any Concern, and never think of them after, and pass by the Place without any Regret, without a Sigh or a Look, to see where they were buried.

BUT, alas! these are so far from being good Arguments, or any Commendation of old Men's Memories, they are a Shame and Reproach, and only put better Things out of their Heads, of more Concern, and of greater Value than their Wealth and their Treasures: There are other Things ought to take up their Thoughts, and employ their Remembrance; the many and manifold, almost innumerable, Actions of their whole Lives, of which they must give an Account, and yet they neither can answer, nor hardly remember, so



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much as one of a thousand. Let any Man try if he can but recollect, not all the trivial, but considerable Passages, of any one Year, of all his whole Life; How few of his Sins does he remember? How many of God's Mercies does he forget? Let him take any Year of his Youth, or his Manhood, or his later old Age, and see what he can make of it. How many of his Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, with all their Circumstances, are fled away like a Dream, when a Man awaketh, and their Images vanish'd quite out of his Memory? A Faculty, indeed, that is strongest in Youth, and weakest in old Age, when we have most need of it! especially in this Case, the great Work of Repentance. So much Reason has every Man, so much more has every old Man, to bewail himself with the Psalmist; *Lord, who can tell how often he offendeth!* And to pray God to cleanse him from his secret Sins; not only those which he hardly consider'd, and scarce understood to be Sins, but those he has so utterly forgotten, they are a Secret to himself, and as unknown as tho' they were never committed.

IV. AND as the Frailty of our Memories, with the Weakness of our Understandings, so the Stiffness of our Wills, may

# S E R M O N VIII. 163

may serve to discourage us from delaying our Repentance till the Time of old Age.

AN Age, as another wise and old Philosopher acknowledges, the most difficult and untractable, *Dura & Intractabilis*; the most hard to be manag'd, and almost irreclaimable. *Non potest Reformari*; he says it cannot be reform'd. A very hard, but (without the Grace of God, of which he knew nothing) a very true Saying. And yet God himself, by his Prophet, has spoken as severely, and made it next to impossible; *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots?* Then may those do good, that have been accustomed to Evil, that have all their Lives long, that have all their long Lives been accustomed to Evil. When we are young, we are easy and pliant, may be bow'd any way, with a little due Care, and with no great Pains to ourselves, or to others: But when we are old, we are often too obstinate, are too wise, at least, in our own Conceit, to be taught and instructed. To repent, is to own we have been Fools all our Life-time, to that Day, to that Hour, to that very Moment; such a Shame to old Age, to our gray hoary Heads, we had rather go on, and be Fools too for ever. Besides, it has always been ac-

M 2      knowledg'd,

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knowledg'd, and has been found by Experience, to be the hardest Thing in the World, to break off long and inveterate Habits of Sin and Vice; and especially to acquire the contrary virtuous Dispositions. For instance, When a Man has been all his life-time disus'd to saying his Prayers, Morning and Evening, what a hard thing will it be to bring such a Person, when he comes to be old, (I will not say, to be fervent, but) constant and diligent in his daily Devotions? What Delight will he take in a Duty to which he has been so little accusom'd? to which he has been always so strangely averse? How grievous will it be to him? He will think his very Prayers (as the Church of *Rome* has made them) to be so many Penances; and be glad, as from his Sins, to be absolv'd even from his Devotions. Whereas, to a Man that has been faithful and constant in the Practice of this pious and excellent Duty, when he comes to be old, it is easy and natural, the very Joy of his Life, his Support and his Comfort, the only Pleasure of which he is capable. Now his Vigour is gone, and his Parts are decay'd, it is all the poor Service he can do God Almighty; and this he will do, and, by the Grace of God, to his latest Breath, till he even commends his

Soul

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Soul into the Hands of his faithful Creator.

I SHOULD now proceed to the remaining Particulars; but instead of engaging any farther at present, I shall chuse, for your better Instruction and Remembrance, to apply those which have been already consider'd.

And First, The Loss, or great Decay of our natural Faculties, when we come to be old, may teach us to set a just Value upon them, in our Youth and our Manhood; not to lose or neglect such excellent Blessings, and especially not to abuse 'em into Curses, and the greatest Misfortunes. 'Twill be a dismal Reflection, when we come to be old, to think what Parts we had, how hopeful and promising, and how sadly misused, and to wish we had been born as senseless as Idiots. When God had given us perhaps Five Talents, to think that we have not only spent them most idly, but have run in debt too, Five other Talents, and are now old and poor, and nothing left us to pay; nothing but a few weak Senses, all broken and shatter'd, the sorrowful Remains of Sin and Wickedness. And when we have need of the strongest Supplications, of crying mightily to God;



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are heavy and drowsy, and can hardly attend to a short Prayer or Collect. And at a pious Discourse, tho' never so affectionate, and our very own Case, in which we are concern'd, are closing our Eyes, our Eyes that are almost too, closing for ever.

AND so again, *Secondly*, The Weakness of our Understandings, when we come to be old, may *teach us so to number our Days*, as to *apply our Hearts to true Wisdom*. To be storing our Minds with spiritual Notions, with a right Apprehension, if not of the Mysteries, yet of the useful and practical Parts of Religion: Not to spend all our Days in this, or that Knowledge, in *the Wisdom of this World*; not to employ all the Vigor of our Youth and Manhood on our Secular Affairs, and to leave the whole Business of Heaven, and our Souls, and eternal Happiness, to a poor, weak, and a craz'd Understanding. If we have learn'd, like *Timothy*, and have known *from our Childhood the Holy Scriptures, that are only able to make us wise to Salvation*; This Wisdom and Knowledge will grow up with our Youth, and improve with our Manhood, and increase to Old Age, till we come to the Measure of our full Growth and Stature in Religion; till we come to  
be

# S E R M O N VIII. 167

be perfect Men in Christ Jesus. And yet could we retain our Intellectual Capacities to a very Old Age, it were yet sure, improvident to let the World have our Youth and our Manhood, to let Strangers and Enemies not only go away with the First Fruits of our Lives, but with the whole Harvest; and to leave ourselves nothing else but the Gleanings. Are these, think we, fit to be laid on God's Altar! or, that the Fire of Heaven will descend to consume, unless in Anger, so worthless an Offering? *Offer it now to thy Governor*, says God himself by his Prophet, *will he be pleas'd with thee, or accept thy Person?* And can we think that God, *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, will accept of the Weak, and the Lame, and the Blind in Sacrifice? *This sure*, if any thing, as the Prophet proceeds, *is to make the Altar of the Lord contemptible.*

BUT *Thirdly*, The Frailty of our Memories, when we come to be old, may teach us, especially to hasten our Repentance: To repent every Day, to acknowledge and bewail our Sins, while they are fresh in our Memories; and not to delay our Confession and Repentance, till, if not all, yet many, or most of our Sins are utterly forgotten. The Remembrance, in-

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deed, of some Sins and Transgressions of a grosser Nature, (I will not say to our Sorrow) we may, perhaps, never lose; for tho' it be to our Sorrow, it is better still they were remember'd than forgotten: But alas! how many in a long Course of Wickedness; how many Thousands will escape us? And of those we retain, how many of the grievous and aggravating Circumstances? We would now confess them, and be heartily sorry, and we know them not; they were so long since committed, and so little regarded, and we took so much Pains to keep off the Thoughts of them, that now they are quite flipp'd out of our Memories: And therefore to prevent such a heavy Misfortune, we should do well, very frequently (I shall not say how often, but the oftener the better) to run over the several Stages of our Lives; the Follies of our Childhood, the Frailties of our Youth, the Sins of our Manhood; to confess them frequently, to bewail them heartily; and this excellent Method will not only keep us in mind of our Sins, but make us always humble, and constantly penitent. And we may hope, by thus keeping our Sins in our own, that God will blot them out of his remembrance.

*Lastly,*

*Lastly*, THE Perverseness of our Wills, whether it proceeds from Pride and Obstinacy, or from Sloth and Laziness, may teach us the Danger of delaying our Repentance, till we come to Old Age, when 'twill be almost as difficult, even in a spiritual, as a natural Sense, for a Man when he is old, to be born again; to enter a-new, upon a good Course of Living. I hope there are none who hear me this Day, that have either almost or altogether been so careless and wicked, as to have lived many Years in any known Sin, or the constant Neglect of any known Duty. If they have; I would beg them, as they hope for Mercy, not to live so a Day, or an Hour longer; but even this Instant, even this very Moment, to break off their Sins by a speedy Repentance. It may be too late, if they delay any longer: However, it is certain, the longer they delay, it will still be more difficult. That which hinders Men at present from repenting, is the Uneasiness; and what do they get by deferring it to the future, but to make it more uneasy? It is grievous to-day, and it will be more so to-morrow; we shall then have more Business, and a great deal less Leisure; and to-morrow will be as this Day, grievous and troublesome, and much more



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more abundantly. And therefore even to day, while it is call'd to day, lest any of us be harden'd thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin, or the Deceitfulness of our Hearts; let us hear the Voice of God calling us to Repentance; before this Voice of God be either lost in Business, or drown'd in Pleasure, nay even before other good Discourses, tho' very pious and useful, have driven This out of our Memories. If we now begin, if from this very Day, we can date our Repentance; 'twill be the happiest Day of our Lives, and make all our Days happy: But as long as we delay, all our Days will be miserable; and (for ought we know, and have reason to fear) will end in eternal Misery.

MAY we consider what has been said, and God give us a right Understanding in all Things, and that for Christ Jesus's sake. *To whom with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.*

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.*



## SERMON IX.

### ECCLES. XII. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.*



HAVE propos'd from these Words, to shew you the Folly and Danger of delaying our Repentance, till the Time of Old Age, *till the evil Days come, and the Years draw nigh, when we shall say, we have no Pleasure in them.*

AND to this end I offer'd the following Considerations.

I. THE Loss, or great Decay of our Natural Faculties.

II. THE Weakness of our Understandings.

III. THE

III. T H E Frailty of our Memories.

IV. T H E Perverseness of our Wills.  
Together with

V. T H E Pains and Distempers:

VI. T H E Cares and Troubles:

VII. T H E Sorrows and Afflictions that  
usually attend Old Age:

VIII. A N D Last of all, and worst of  
all, The grievous Reflection on a long Life  
of Wickedness.

I H A V E done with the *Four First*, and  
proceed now to the *Fifth* Consideration.

V. T H E Pains and Distempers that  
most usually and frequently, if not con-  
stantly, do attend Old Age, and render it  
a very unfit Time to repent; I am sure,  
the worst Time of our Life to begin our  
Repentance.

T H E R E are very few Men, who have  
been so happy, (shall I say, or unhappy)  
as to have enjoy'd a perfect Health all their  
Life-time, and never to have known any  
Pain

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Pain or Sickneſs. Very few Sons, tho' never ſo unworthy, whom God has not chaſten'd; whom he never regarded, and never once viſited; but ſome time or other his afflicting Hand has thrown them violently, or laid them down gently, on their Bed of Sickneſs; and without any ſeeming, tho' much real Pity, has There let them lye, and groan, and languish, with ſome painful Diſtemper, or ſome pining Diſeaſe. And he who has ever been in ſuch a Condition, may eaſily remember, and if he has any true Piety, he can never forget, how unapt, and untoward, how indiſpoſed he was to Religion: When his Pains were upon him, and his Griefs were violent, how reſtleſs and uneaſy? how little attentive, how almoſt weary of any long Devotions? And tho' ſome, indeed, may take their Sickneſs not only patiently, but joyfully and thankfully; and if not in the miſt, yet at leaſt in the Intervals, of their Pains and Agonies, have expreſs'd very lively Acts of Repentance, and felt as ſtrong Agonies of Faith and Devotion; yet, beſides that Theſe have been uſually Perſons of great Goodneſs and Piety, who have made it the Buſineſs of their Lives to ſerve God; yet even They have confeſs'd, and have ſadly bewail'd, if not their Averſion, their Indiſpoſition, their want  
of



of Affection, that their Prayers were languid, and often interrupted; and the greatest Support of their Weakness and Inability was the comfortable Reflection, that in their Health and Vigor they had pray'd more fervently, and had a thousand Times repented of their Sins, and a thousand Times had ask'd God Forgiveness; and they hoped, that he would remember their Offerings, and accept their Sacrifices, and would grant them, at length, their Heart's Desire, and perform, and fulfil all their Petitions. And if good Men, even the best Men, have made such Confessions, and such grievous Complaints, is it not an unspeakable, a most unaccountable Folly, to reserve that Age for Repentance, which is often nothing else, but Pain and Grief, and Labour, and Sorrow? When the Spirit of Man can hardly bear his Infirmities, is he fit to be oppress'd, and to be heavy laden with his Sins and Iniquities? Are not his Distempers and his Pains much likelier to make him fretful and peevish, rather than penitent? When rack'd with the Gout, or shook with a Palsy, or convuls'd with an Asthma, will he then be at leisure, will he then have the Patience to think of repenting? Are you not unkind, are you not very cruel, to torment the poor Man, that is labouring for Life,  
and

# SERMON IX. 175

and just gasping for Breath, to molest and disturb him with such unpleasant Discourses? had you not better let him alone? or had you not better have told him of these Things before, when he was in his Health, and Strength, and Vigor? And when he was in his Health, and Strength, and Vigor, he was told them before, and to as little purpose, as he is told of them now, and as little regarded. And thus, Men neglect and delay their Repentance till they come to Old Age; and then they think to be perfectly quiet, and wholly at leisure, and shall then have nothing else to do, but repent: And when they come to be old, they find their Pains and Distempers, a greater Hindrance than all their Pleasures, and their former Temptations.

2dly, AND as the Pains and Distempers, that are usually incident to Old Age, do render it an unfit Time for Repentance: So likewise the Cares and Troubles that are almost as constant Companions of Old Age, as Pains and Sickness. It is next to impossible, for a Man to arrive to any great Age, without many vexatious and troublesome Concerns, either on the Account of himself, or of others; and those others, perhaps, as near and as dear  
to

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to him as himself. And Old Age, as past much of Action, being naturally thoughtful, and very considerate; Men are apt to lie brooding and doubling their Cares, and increasing their Troubles; and be they never so well inclin'd, and so piously dispos'd, These will be crowding themselves into the midst of their Prayers and Devotions; and they will never be able, with all their Endeavours, to keep these Flies and Insects from infesting their Sacrifices; tho' they drive them away too, never so often, they will as often be returning, and settling again: And therefore, it is certainly very imprudent to assign our Old Age for the Work of Repentance; when our Cares and Troubles, (like the Thorns in the Parable) will choak our Labours, and make them unfruitful: Or if some Ears of good Corn do arise, they will yet be less than the Thorns and the Thistles. Every Man knows, even in every Estate, when his Mind is disturb'd and perplex'd with Trouble, how unfit he is for any thing of serious and close Application. And tho' in Youth or Manhood, by the Vigor of our Spirits, we are able to overcome, or at least to forget, all our Cares and Troubles; and discharge and throw off the peccant ill Humours, by meer Strength of Nature; yet in Old Age (which is either  
wiser

wiser or weaker) we shall find them too powerful, a heavy Load at our Hearts, and no easy Matter to lift our Souls up to Heaven, with such a Weight on our Spirits; they will grieve and vex, and not only disturb and distract, but prophane, and unhallow all our Prayers and Devotions.

III. *BUT Thirdly*, The Sorrows and Afflictions, which are almost unavoidable, in a Course of many Years, will be likewise a Disturbance, and a Hindrance to our holy and religious Exercises: When other Grievs and Sorrows are upon us, we shall hardly be capable of being truly griev'd and sorry for our Transgressions. These Afflictions, tho' they are but for a Moment, lie nearer our Hearts, and are oftentimes heavier than the exceeding Weight of our Sins and Iniquities. The Sorrow of this World may work Death indeed, or shorten our Days; but is seldom productive of that Godly Sorrow, that worketh Repentance. It is true, the many Afflictions of the Righteous do drive them nearer to God, as their only Comfort, and make them more holy, and humble, and penitent: But Those who all their Life-time never came near him, whom his out-stretch'd Hand could never reach, could never at least reduce or

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recover ; those are not likely to be very much elevated by their Sorrows and Afflictions in their Prayers and Devotions ; those Sorrows and Afflictions, which they had borne either carelessly or stupidly, or perhaps prophanely and impiously ; and had sinn'd in them all, and had charg'd God foolishly, had disputed, and despised, or deny'd his Providence. It is nothing to a good Man, it is easy, it is natural, when afflicted, to pray ; and, in the multitude of the Sorrows that he has in his Heart, to find the Comforts of God refreshing his Soul : But it is not so with the Wicked, that have lived in a constant Neglect both of this, and all other Duties. In the Days of their Health, and Ease, and Prosperity, they could never endure to think of it with patience ; it was tedious and troublesome ; and now, in the midst of their Grievs and Sorrows, and so many Afflictions, it is a greater Vexation. They cannot subdue or quiet their Passions, and much less compose their Minds to Devotion ; are hardly affected, and but little transported, can scarce rise at all, or rise very heavily, or are soon down again ; the Wings of their Souls are clipp'd with ill Accidents, or molted with Age, and damp, and all wet with Sorrows and Afflictions : And yet thus do Men delay their Repentance,

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tance, till *the evil Days come, and the Years draw nigh, when they can find no Pleasure in any thing, and least of all, in those Things in which they never delighted.*

BEFORE I proceed to the next Consideration, the grievous Reflection on a long Life of Wickedness, give me leave to apply Those I have now mention'd, and being much of the same Nature, I shall join them together: The Pains and Distempers, the Cares and Troubles, the Sorrows and Afflictions, that attend Old Age, and not only render it an unfit Time for Repentance, as has been shewn already, and which I shall not enlarge; but do afford us many other very useful Instructions.

AND the *First* may be this; To wean us from the Fondness, the Love, or the Desire of Old Age itself: *Which (in the Words of the Prophet) has no Form or Comeliness, no manner of Loveliness, that it should be desired.* It is not only an Age full of Pains and Sorrows, and acquainted with Grievs; but what is the greatest of all, is apt to be despis'd. Men hide their Faces from it, or look upon it with Contempt. It should be reverenc'd; and the grey, and the hoary Head should be honour'd; but it labours under so many Dis-

N 2                      advantages,

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advantages, that (like Wisdom in Poverty) tho' never so deserving, it is little regarded. And this *Tully* has observ'd, in his famous Discourse on this Subject, That the Reason why old Men are so morose and uneasy, is because they think themselves scorn'd and despis'd.

*Contemni se putant, despici, illudi.*

And this has been the Fortune, not only of such Persons, as have been useless, and never worth any Respect; but of Those, who, in their Time, have been useful and serviceable, of eminent Parts, and of many great Excellencies; but now so quite decay'd, they can hardly be thought to have ever been excellent. So justly may the Aged, under his many Infirmities, take up the Complaint of holy *Job*, in his Afflictions: *In the Months that are past*, and in his former Days, *when the Candle of God shined upon his Head*; when his Judgment was clear, and quick, and bright his Invention; when he not only walk'd in safety thro' Darkness; but led others, and guided 'em by his wise Instructions; when his Speech fell upon them, *like the Dew of Heaven*; when they hung on his Lips, and waited for his Words, as the Earth for the former, and the latter Rain; *when the*  
*Ear*

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*Ear that heard him, blessed him and admired, and all Men kept silence, and could have heard him for ever ! when not only the Young, but the Aged arose, and laid their Hands on their Mouths, and their Heads in the Dust, and bow'd down to him, and made him Obeysance : Then he was happy, he was then as honour'd, as Job in his Health, and Wealth, and Prosperity : But now, they that are younger have him in Derision, he is become their Song, the Subject of their idle Mirth and Railery : Something they find in him to carp and censure, or if they can find no Fault in him, yet his very Old Age, like Job's Affliction, shall make him contemptible ; tho' at the same time, if he bear his Age handsomely, he is more to be honour'd ; as Job in his Affliction, was a much greater Man, and more worthy Respect, in his patient Sufferings, than in all his former, or his latter Prosperity. And yet, could a Man, when he comes to be aged, avoid the Contempt, or the Pity of others, he could hardly forbear, if not to despise, yet to pity himself : To think what he was, and how strangely he is alter'd ; how unlike to himself in his Strength and Manhood : Then he flourish'd like a Cedar in Libanus, like a Cypress in Hermon, or a Palm in Engedi ; and he gave a sweet*



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*and a pleasant Savour* ; and he stretch'd out his Branches, and his Branches were the Branches of Wisdom and Honour : But now he is torn, and broken, and shatter'd ; broken with Age, and all torn and shatter'd with Winds and Tempests ; bereft not only of his Leaves, and his Fruit, but his Boughs and his Branches ; a lifeless Trunk ; and if he be not cut down, yet is dead as he stands, and dry'd up, and wither'd. And what Reason has any Man to be fond of all these Miseries ? He would live, perhaps, to a very great Age, without them ; but That is almost impossible. If he see many Years, in *this Vale of Misery*, in *this Shadow of Death*, he must see many Sorrows. And could he attain to the Age of *Methusalem* ; or stretch his hundred to a thousand Years, he would only live to be ten Times more miserable. Why should he not be rather contented, to go out of the World whole and entire, than mangled and tortur'd, and rack'd like a Martyr ? He were certainly very foolish, if there were a middle State, when he might go strait to Heaven, that would needs go thro' Purgatory.

BUT, *Secondly*, As we should not for these, and many other good Reasons, be very fond of old Age, so much less desirous,

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rous, when we come to be old, of being yet a little older; still hoping and wishing to live yet a little longer. Methinks, when once we have felt these Miseries, and have tasted of the bitter Draught, we should not be so fond of taking the whole Potion. All that is good we have had, and are coming to the Dregs, and why should we wring them, and suck them out, and overcharge our weak Stomachs? When we have sat a fair Time, long enough in all conscience, for our Hunger, or our Pleasure, and have not only been feasted, but almost surfeited with Life, why should we not be willing, if God so pleases, to be taken away; and what is easier and healthier, to rise with an Appetite? But, alas! as old Age is observ'd to be covetous, so in this more than any thing; and like a senseless Miser, is heaping up Years, which it can never enjoy, still reaching and grasping at more, when it has more than it knows what to do with already. And this *Tully* has told us too in his foremention'd Discourse; *Nemo est tam senex qui se annum non putet posse vivere.* No Man is so old, but he thinks or hopes he may live a Year longer; and when that is done, another Year too he thinks is not impossible. And thus, as

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young Men flatter themselves with Hopes of being old, tho' they are often deceiv'd; so old Men, a great deal more weakly and foolishly, are flattering themselves with another old Age; not in the whole, indeed, but only by Parcels, and by little Degrees, but dare not once think of it altogether.

BUT, *Thirdly*, As we should not be fond, or over desirous of very old Age, so all Things consider'd, we should rather be jealous of it, and almost afraid. Men desire to live long, but unless they resolve, and not only resolve, but live well all the while, what is it they desire? Have they not Sins enough already, to drown them in Perdition? And would they add to the Number, and sink themselves lower? I suppose they will answer, By no means, God forbid! they do not design to live a little longer, to be so much more miserable. But if they live wickedly, and go on in their Sins, and the Neglect of their Duty, I shall not say God cannot, but he will not forbid, and has expressly declared they shall be more miserable. That *those shall be beaten with many Stripes, who knew their Lord's Will, and had Time and Opportunity to*

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prepare themselves, and never thought of it whole Years together; and instead of doing their Lord's, did nothing but their own Will and Pleasure: And therefore it was happy for that slothful and wicked Servant in the Gospel, that he receiv'd but one Talent, since he made no more use of it; and had he been entrusted with five or ten, his Case had been worse, and he had only been so much the more wretched for ever. Why then should Men be so fond and desirous of living to be old? Would they increase their Guilt, and enhance their Punishment? No doubt they will answer, this is not their Intent: But if they go on in their Sins and Iniquities, whatever they intend, as sure as they live, and what is more certain, as sure as they shall die, this will be the Consequence. And would Men but think of it, it would make them tremble, more than all the Palfies of old Age. But they dare not think, and dare almost as soon die as consider. And this, after all, is the very true Reason why Men would live long, and would fain see many good Days; they cannot; but as many as possible. It is not so much their Desire of living, for that decreases every Day, but their Fear of dying; and that too every Day increases;



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ses; and the longer they live, they are the nearer their Misery; and the longer they live in Sin and Impenitence, their Misery will be greater. And what do they get by deferring their Sentence, if at last when it comes, it will be so much more terrible. Give me leave to put a Case, and I believe scarce any one would ever put it in practice. Suppose a Man were condemn'd to die some common Death, and should beg and intreat to live two or three Days longer, and then would be willing to be broke on a Wheel, to be rack'd and tortur'd, and contented to be so many Days too a dying: When the Time were over, would he not tremble at the sight of the Wheel? And when, under the Torture, would he not repent every Vein of his Heart, and think he was certainly mad and distracted? And yet so is every one who wishes to live a little while longer, to respite his Punishment. When the longest Age he can hope to live, were it that of the Patriarchs, is but two or three Days, or Hours, or Moments, in respect of Eternity.

T H E last Inference I shall make (for I shall not at present proceed any farther on this Subject) shall be that of the Text, to

I

*Remember*

# S E R M O N IX. 187

*Remember our Creator, before the evil Days come, and the Years draw nigh, when we shall have no Pleasure in them; and then we are certain, whenever they come, and as evil as they are, we shall have Pleasure in them, and abundant Satisfaction. Not all the Gaieties of Youth, nor the Delights of Manhood, can be compar'd with the single Thought or Reflection, that in our Youth and Manhood we have sincerely endeavoured to serve and please God, and to keep his Commandments. This will cure or assuage all our Pains and Distempers, will ease or divert all our Cares and Troubles, will comfort and endear, will sanctify all our Sorrows and Afflictions. This, as Job speaks, will be Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame: Or, as the Psalmist expresses it, will renew our Strength, and make us young again as the Eagle. We shall then have nothing to do, but like Paul the Aged, to wait our Departure, expect our Dissolution: And having fought a good Fight, and finish'd our Course, shall receive of the Lord the Crown of Righteousness. Which, I pray God give to us, and to all those who love his Appearing; and that for the only Sake and Merits of our Lord Christ Jesus: To whom, with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour*

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*nour and Glory, now and for ever. And  
the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the  
Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy  
Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.*



S E R-



## SERMON X.

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MARK II. 27.

*And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath,*



HOEVER shall attempt, tho' with the clearest Integrity, to reform the Abuses and Corruptions of Religion, shall find himself in nothing more zealously oppos'd, than in those Principles and Practices that carry with them a fair Shew of Piety. To this even Interest will sometimes submit; and not knowing which way to continue the Dispute (like a weak Prince unable to maintain his Title) will call in Piety to its Aid and Assistance, and even fight under the Banners of its most mortal Enemy.

AND



AND of this our blessed Saviour had very frequent Experience, yet could he not satisfy the *Jews*, either with Reason or Miracles. Several wond'rous Cures he wrought, all to the same Purpose, to convince them of their false Notions concerning the Sabbath, for which they had such a fond and superstitious Veneration. That of the poor Man that lay at the Pool of *Bethesda*; that of the Man with a wither'd Hand, before 'em all, in their Synagogue; that of the Man that was born blind, and brought afterwards to the *Sanhedrim*, and for owning God's Mercy to him, cast out and excommunicated. Besides, upon his Miracles our Saviour took occasion to discourse and preach on the Subject, and gave them good Authority: That his Father, as much as they thought he rested, did work hitherto, and was now working a greater Work than that of the Creation. Yet whatever he could say or do, was not able to remove their Prejudice; and they thought they sufficiently answer'd all his Arguments and Miracles, with, *This Man cannot be of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath!* But tho' the *Jews* were so incredulous, yet it seems his Disciples were better instructed, and understood their own Privileges; and  
*walking*

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*walking thro' the Corn Fields, while it was yet early, on the Sabbath*; when, according to the Traditions of their Elders, it was customary to fast till after the Time of Morning Service; *they plucked the Ears of Corn as they walked along, and eat them freely*; tho' they saw they were follow'd and watch'd by the *Pharisees*: And tho' the Text says *they were hungry*, yet we cannot think they would have famish'd or been starv'd, had they forborn, and stay'd till Morning Prayer was over, no more than we can think the poor Man that lay at the Pool of *Bethesda*, would have died the next Day, had he not been cured that very Sabbath. But this they did, no doubt, after their great Master's Example in like Cases, and in Observance of his Doctrine, and to shew and assert their Liberty. Whereupon the *Pharisees* come up to our Saviour, and accuse his Disciples of Prophaneness; tho' the Accusation was plainly levell'd at him, for not teaching them better. But taking no notice of that, he clears and justifies his Disciples by the Example of their Prophet King *David*, and their High-Priest *Abiathar*; by the daily Practice of their own Priests in the Temple; by the Word of God to another Prophet, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*; and in the Text he lays 'em down

down this plain decisive Doctrine, sufficient to determine any Controversy in this or the like Nature, That *the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath.* They, indeed, by their Additions, had made it mere Bondage, not a Rest, but a Restraint, a Day of worldly Ease and Sloth, and of religious Toil and Slavery: But Man was not made for the Sabbath, especially for a Sabbath of their making; that consisted of such numberless little scrupulous Niceties, that it was more difficult to serve and please them, than God Almighty. No, *the Sabbath was made for Man*, for his Use and his Advantage; both for God's, and for his Service; for his Benefit, and God's Glory. All the rest were their own Devices, no Intention of their good Lawgiver; he gave them a gentle Yoke, they had made it grievous and intolerable, and the *Scribes and Pharisees* little Finger was heavier than the Loins of *Moses*.

It may possibly be suspected by what hath been said hitherto, that I intend to discourse against the Morality of the Sabbath, and by consequence of the Lord's-Day, and its strict Observation. But, alas! we live in an Age so very loose and profane, that God knows there is no Need  
or

# SERMON X. 193

or Occasion for such Discourses. Men are before-hand with us, and do not want to be driven farther from Religion. My Design is the quite contrary; and tho' I am very sensible it is a Subject nice and difficult, and we shall never please all People; and some will think we say too much, and some few that we do not say enough: Yet waving all Arguments that are doubtful and disputable, (which do but cumber a Cause, and prejudice it, as the Jewish Ceremonies did the Sabbath) I shall proceed on these very plain, and (I think) undeniable Principles

I. First, then, Reason tells us, that God Almighty should be publicly worshipped.

II. Reason and Experience tell us, that this can never be well secur'd, without appointing set Times and Seasons for his Worship.

III. Reason and Religion tell us, that we should allow a fair Competency, a good Portion of our Time to the Service of God Almighty.

IV. That a Day in a Week, at least, is but a very reasonable Proportion.



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this is so plain and evident, that I shall not so much question your Judgment, nor presume upon your Patience, as to insist on it any farther. To have a Worship, and leave it at Random, we had ev'n as good have no Worship; nay, we should have none, considering our natural Indisposition, our Backwardness and Averse-ness to the Service of God Almighty. And as lightly as some Men think of this Day, yet were it not for this Day, we might by this Time have lost our Religion. I proceed therefore to the next Principle, which comes up yet closer to our Purpose.

III. R E A S O N and Religion tell us, that we ought to assign a fair Competency, a good Proportion of our Time, to the Service and Worship of God Almighty; and this too, fix'd and stated; for to make all Times alike, to talk of serving God at any Time, is a Shuffle and meer Excuse; and those who are loth to pay their Debts, we can hardly suppose do mean to be charitable. Now for allowing a competent Time for God's Service, there are so many, so plain and strong Reasons, as will satisfy the most dissolute; such invincible Considerations, as cannot so much as be question'd by any that are not asham'd

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and quite weary of the Name of Christian, and think it rather a Burthen, than either an Honour or Happiness. Were there nothing in it but this, that our Time itself is his Donation, and to deny him a good Share of it, were unjust and ungrateful: He is our sovereign Lord and Prince, his watchful Care and Providence preserves us in our Being, and protects us in our Enjoyments; and can we refuse to pay him Tribute, to whom we owe our whole Estate? Methinks we should go farther, and, of our own Accord, present him handsomely, make him a noble Offer, such as is necessary for his Service, such as were some way adequate to our infinite Obligations: Especially too, when the Present we make him, is not more for his Glory, than for our Welfare and Happiness. Is not the Time that we spend in the Service of God Almighty, worth all our Time? Besides, is not the rest of it, in comparison, lost and thrown away, on Things of very little Consequence, on Things that concern us but a few Hours, and may not concern us an Hour longer? Should God take away such Men in this un sanctify'd Disposition, this untoward Dislike and Disaffection to his Service, whither would they go? Whither, if they had their Choice and Liberty? Heaven

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were no Place for 'em, there's nothing but praising and adoring; they would be wearier than ever, than they were here, of those holy Offices. The Service of God would be a Torment and Vexation to their Spirits, would (indeed) be the greatest Punishment to 'em for the Neglect of his Service. They who could not endure to be an Hour in his Presence, how weary would they be to be for ever in his Company! For the Place would not change 'em, or transform 'em in an Instant; Heaven itself would not make 'em Saints, if they came not Saints thither; and if they were unholy here, they would there too be still unholy. So that, methinks, even in Prudence we should be willing to allow and employ a good Share of our Time while we live here, in God's Service, even in order to it hereafter; to prepare and inure ourselves, considering it is likely to be all our Business to Eternity.

AND yet even for the present, is there any Business whatsoever that can come nigh the Service of God here for Pleasure and Delight? Judge ev'n in yourselves, Brethren, you who are here present; are you not better pleas'd, think you, than many who are now away? Are you not a great deal more contented, and better satisfy'd

tisfy'd in your Conscience, than those that are spending their Time in Idleness or Vanity? And when we have done the like ourselves, have we not found we were troubled, and for all that we could say or think, had we not some secret Misgivings? Whatever we do of other Things, 'tis certain we shall never repent of the Time employ'd upon our Souls, and in the Service of God Almighty. To whom, if we consider our infinite Obligations, so great and so many, that there is no end of considering; for whose Service, and whose Worship, we were all purposely created; *in whom* (as St. Paul speaks) *we live, and move, and have our Being*, and in whom we hope to live again, and to have yet a better Being: We cannot for his Sake, for our own Sake, think much of a fair Competency, a good Measure of our Time to be allotted to his Service; and therefore cannot question (I think) the Truth of this next Principle,

IV. That for such great and holy Purposes, a Day in a Week, at least, is but a very reasonable Proportion. 'Tis the Opinion of several Fathers, in assigning the Reason of God's appointing the old Sabbath to the People of *Israel*, that for the Hardness of their Hearts he gave them



that Precept. They were not only a miserable, but a covetous People; and the more so, for having been bred so long in Poverty and Slavery; having for some hundred Years toil'd and labour'd for others Profit, when they came to work for themselves, they would have no Measure nor Reason; like Men almost famish'd, and brought to a full Table, they would fall on too greedily, and even feed to a Surfeit; would impose too hard Burthens on their Cattle and Servants, and use 'em as bad as themselves had been us'd by their Task-Masters. They had little of their own too, but what they had borrow'd of the *Egyptians*; and the Sight and Taste of that, only provok'd their Desire and Appetite; they would make so much haste to be rich, they would fall into divers Temptations, and the worst and greatest of all, Forgetfulness of God Almighty: And therefore he restrains 'em by this wise and pious Precept, and takes a Day in a Week from them to his own Use and Service: That as he had his Portion of their Substance and Increase, so even of their Time too he might have his Oblation.

AND if such were the Reasons of this Imposition on God's People, one would think,

think, as the Case stands, it should not only be continu'd, but increas'd, rather than taken off, or diminish'd. For, to our Shame be it spoken, are not those who are called Christians, as worldly and ambitious, as tho' they were just come out of Slavery? Who, that shall look about him, and take a View of *Christendom*, shall observe the little Scufflings, and mighty Contestings, how restless and indefatigable, how furious and desperate, in the Pursuit of these Things, but would think they were a People that had plac'd all their Aim, all their Happiness on this World, and had no Thoughts of another? Who sees 'em not every where a thousand times more industrious to get Places or Estates, than to make sure of their Salvation? That troubles 'em but seldom, neither one Day in seven, no nor in seventy times seven, does it come into Consideration: Or, if at any time they chance to think of it, is laid aside the same Moment, look'd upon as a troublesome, a tedious, endless Business, a Hindrance to Affairs that concern 'em more immediately. And what aggravates the Fault, and makes it greater as to Christians, than it could be in the *Jews*, they have not only clearer and larger Promises of the other World; but of this too, fewer, and darker,

darker, and doubtfuller; and yet they act still quite contrary, as tho' they thought These were all sure, and Those were uncertain. The *Jews*, indeed, in prosecuting their worldly Affairs, if they had been too eager, had yet been a little excusable; 'twas all the Happiness they were promis'd, at least plainly and expressly; and 'tis much to be fear'd too, all that was most generally expected; temporal Judgments and Punishments only, threatned for their Obstinacy; and Health, Peace, and Plenty, the Reward of their Obedience. They might think they were obliged to be industrious and labourious, even in Gratitude, in Compliance, in pursuance of such Promises, that otherwise they should be wanting to themselves, and to God Almighty. And tho' he had promis'd 'em a good Land, a *Land even flowing with Milk and Honey*, yet they knew the Stream would be soon dry, if it were not kept open, if it were not kept always running, with their constant Pains and Industry. And yet notwithstanding all this, God thought fit, in great Wisdom, to lay such a Restraint on 'em. And can any then complain, can any think it such a Burthen, so grievous, so intolerable, those especially who in their Baptism (of which the Red-Sea was a Figure) have  
openly

openly renounc'd the World, and its inordinate Desire, and talk of a heavenly *Canaan*, and expect a heavenly *Jerusalem*? As *St. Paul* speaks of the *Gentiles*, so the *Jews* on this Account should provoke ev'n the Christians to Emulation and Jealousy. But this too, is so evident, I shall insist on it no longer; and am confident that those very Persons who are so loth and unwilling to grant God ev'n thus much, will not say but it is reasonable, and that they have Time enough in all Conscience to mind their other Affairs, when yet in respect of this one, all of them, put together, are scarce worth the minding. I proceed therefore to the next Principle,

V. THAT the Lord's Day is appointed by good and sufficient Authority; such Authority as a Christian cannot question, and such Authority, I am sure, as a good Christian will obey. I shall give it you in few Words too, that it may appear the more forcible. Very fair Intimations of it (at least) in holy Scripture, undoubted Testimonies of the most primitive Christians, observing it immediately after, if not in the Time of the Apostles; and this in all Churches, tho' never so distant, of the Apostles own Plantation; in which it is incredible to conceive how they should agree



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agree so universally, so presently, so easily, without so much as the least Difference, if it were not a thing of direct Apostolical Institution. And it is remarkable to this Purpose, that in the very second Century, when the Eastern and Western Churches disagreed about *Easter*, tho' That was the Foundation of This, and the great solemn Anniversary of our Saviour's Resurrection, yet both Churches held the Lord's-Day all the while, without any Controversy. And thus was it observ'd for publick religious Assemblies for the three first Ages, as well, at least, as it could be observ'd in Times of so great Troubles and Persecutions : And no sooner was the Church of Christ settled in Peace and Quietness, but, by all the Authority that was in the Church, most free and general Councils, confirm'd and ratified, and so has ever since continued : In so many hundred Years never so much as once question'd, unless by a few Hereticks that deny'd the Resurrection. And (I doubt not) but if the World should, and if the World does, the Church will, last sixteen hundred Years more ; it will continue, as well as either of 'em, sixteen hundred Years longer. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the strange Zeal of some Authors, in arguing, the Church  
may

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may alter the Day, if she see good Occasion: For (besides, that a Case that has not happened in sixteen hundred Years, is a very unlikely Case, and we may suppose will never happen; besides this, I say.) such arguing is of very dangerous and ill Consequence; and I am confident that those Persons who urge the Church's Authority in this, would be unwilling she should use it in some other Instance; tho' built upon no better, I think the very same Foundation; and this is good enough too, and they do not need any better. I confess, indeed, that *Calvin* (I should give him a better Title, but in this thing I cannot) was of Opinion it might be altered; and had some Designs of changing the Lord's-Day from *Sunday, in feriam Quintam*; that is, into *Thursday*; tho' not by any Churches indeed, but his own supreme Authority; by which he chang'd the very Church itself from Episcopacy to Presbytery, when it is plain that both of them are Catholick and Apostolical; and he is a bold Man that dares remove those Bounds and Land-Marks, and might fear the Curse of God, and his Churches Anathema. I say then, the Lord's-Day is appointed by sufficient Authority, by such Authority, as in the Judgment of a Person the most judicious, obliges the very Conscience.

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Conscience. And certainly if so good a Title, so well grounded at first, and of so very long Prescription, may be question'd and cashier'd, we may question half our Religion, and cashier so great a part of it, as what we leave will be insignificant. Having thus briefly and plainly shewn you, That God Almighty should be publickly worshipp'd; That this can never be done, as it ought to be, without appointing set Times and Seasons; That we are oblig'd to allow a competent good Share of Time to his Service; That one Day in a Week is no unreasonable Proportion; and That the Lord's-Day is appointed by good and sufficient Authority,

I come now, in the last Place, to shew, That those are blame-worthy, upon many Accounts, who do not spend it, as to the main, in the Duties of Religion. And tho' I intend to discourse chiefly on our Obligations to the Publick Worship, yet I shall add a word or two also of our Private Conversation: But in that, as *St. Paul* speaks, I shall only give my Advice. And (tho' I may not say with him, as one who has obtain'd Mercy, to be faithful, yet) I shall do it with all Humility and Sincerity.

WE are oblig'd then to attend the publick Worship on this Day, for the Honour of God Almighty. As there cannot be a greater Disgrace to an earthly Prince or Potentate, than to see an empty Court, to behold a thin Presence, especially at such Times too as he makes his publick Appearance; so is there not a greater Reflection ev'n to the Divine Majesty, than to see his Courts bare, his Sanctuary almost empty, especially on such Days too as he gives publick Audience: 'Twere enough to make the World think he were fallen in the Affections, had lost all the Love and Esteem of his Subjects and his Creatures; that they thought him unable to reward them for their Attendance, had deserted him, and were gone over to some other Prince's Service.

AND if it be fit to mention any thing after God Almighty, and if any thing be worth regarding when he is dishonour'd, 'tis an Affront also to the Church, and a great Reproach to Religion. Why should her good Orders and Constitutions be so slighted? Do we think (as the Apostle speaks in behalf of the Civil Magistrate) *do we think she bears the Sword in vain?* that there is no Edge in her Censures?

And



And to shew too that we think so, can take it up, and play with it, and deprive ourselves at any time, when we please, of her Assemblies? Is it done like dutiful Children, that had any Sense of Gratitude to so great and so good a Mother, so pious and so indulgent; that brought 'em up on her Knees, and nurs'd 'em at her Breasts, and carry'd 'em in her Arms, and cherish'd 'em in her Bosom; when she sends to 'em to wait on her, for her Comfort and her Glory, to shew with what a goodly, with what a fair numerous Offspring God had bless'd her; to send her word again, that they owe her no such Service or Obedience? Must she sit alone like *Rachel, mourning and weeping for her Children*; not *because they are not*, but, what is worse, are grown undutiful?

I MIGHT add too, but alas! when God Almighty is dishonour'd, when the Holy Church is despis'd, what are Men, that they should be minded, or the Sons of Men that they should be visited? Yet I might add, 'tis a great Contempt upon the Servants of Religion, who tho' unworthy such Honour and Glory, yet is their Office and Ministry little lower than that of Angels. 'Tis true indeed, it is their Duty to wait still on their Ministry; yet it looks  
like

like a Reproach to 'em, and is certainly a great Discouragement, to see both God's, and their Service, often slighted and neglected.

AND all upon such poor little trifling Occasions, as Men are ashamed to own, and will never be able to justify. Sometimes it is nothing in the World but pure Sloth and Idleness; a lazy, listless Humour; and the very Day makes 'em lazier, worse than all the Week, and strangely wearies 'em more than ordinary; and now to go to the House of God, looks like a vast Expedition; as tho' every Step they took thither were a Sabbath-Days Journey. *Arnobius*, in the Fourth Book of his Disputations against the *Gentiles*, upbraids the Heathens for having such a strange Goddess as Idleness; and yet as strange as he thought it, it is to be found too among Christians: And Chambers are her Temples, and Beds and Couches her Altars; and what is worse too, the Lord's Day is her great and solemn Festival.

BUT it is not only Sloth to which this Day is often dedicated; it is many times devoted (God forgive us) to Sensuality, to Riot and Excess: But as *St. Paul* ask'd the *Corinthians*, *Have ye not Houses to eat*

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and to drink in, or despise ye the Church of God? So, have not Men Days to eat and to drink in, or despise they the Day of the Lord? They may despise this, but then the other will be terrible. And should he come (as some Learned Men have been of opinion) upon this Day to Judgment, 'twill be a very unhappy Circumstance to be taken at their Revels, when they should have been at their Devotions. The Jews were derided by their Enemies, who took no notice of their Religion, but only of their Ease and Idleness; that in observing their Sabbath, they lost a Day in seven; and it is a Day in seven lost, if we spend it (like them) in Idleness; but if spent in Sin and Wickedness, it is a losing of all the other.

AND the Ground of this strange Carriage is all this while as strange a Principle, That all Days are alike: And no doubt too, they are in themselves; and the Light of this Day's Sun has no more in it, than that of Yesterday; and no more than it will have To-morrow: There is no more in These Walls, than there is in Those of our City, and yet this Place sure is holy; and why is not this Day as holy? I am sure it has receiv'd as good a Consecration. 'Tis wonderful to observe, how Those who are very  
zealous

# S E R M O N X. 211

zealous for a due Reverence to this Place, do esteem this Day but indifferently; and Those, who are as zealous for this Day, and its Observation, do behave themselves in This Place again, as rudely and irreverently, as tho' they were only crossing and taking Revenge of one another; when both are holy alike, and only as relating to God Almighty. Why then do Men treat him so humourously and partially? Uncover'd in his House, and despise his Day, and his Worship; bow down to him at their Entrance, and turn their Backs on his Service? Were we truly pious, we should be of the mind of holy *David*, and think *a day in these courts better (and not longer) than a thousand.* Like as the *Hart desires the Water-Brooks*, so would our Souls, pursu'd with worldly Cares and Troubles, quite spent and tired with Folly, *be athirst for the Living God; be athirst for the Waters of Life; as the hunted Hart for the Rivers;* and having drank our Fill too, and reviv'd and refresh'd our Spirits, be the better able to bear the World's Chace the Week after.

GIVE me leave to add a Word or two of our more private Conversation; but this I do, by Permission still, and not by Command or Authority: Let me not be thought



precise or superstitious in this matter; but what if Men should spend a little more too, of this Day, religiously? In preparing themselves for their Duty in the Publick, in reflecting with themselves afterwards, how they have done their Duty? Whether humble and devout, or supine and negligent? And what if they consider of what they have heard a little? And not take their leave of it in the Church, or at the Church-Door at farthest? What if they should consider it again, not only to pass their Judgment; but if any thing were good and pious, to think of putting it in Practice?

W H A T if they spent an Hour in the Closet too, as well as in the Congregation? In reading and meditating? In taking notice of their Condition? In observing the State of their Souls? Especially too, such Persons as are almost constantly employ'd and immers'd in a great deal of Business. Is any Day more proper, can any Time be more convenient, than when they are quite at leisure, are got loose from worldly Affairs, when their Thoughts and Minds are, or may be, and should be at liberty?

B U T it is not only Men of Business, and continual Employment, but Persons  
of

# S E R M O N X. 213

of the greatest Leisure, that we could wish would be more considerate: And what too, if such Persons, whose Life is almost a Pastime, what if They spent some of this day too, in their private Devotions? Have they not Days enough, more than they know what to do withal, besides, for their Recreations? And must this too be a Day of Pleasure? But is not this to use God as hardly as *David* in the Parable, is said to have us'd his poor Neighbour? To make bold with his single Lamb, and take it for their Entertainment, when they have a fair Flock of their own? And what enhances the Unkindness, when the fair Flock they have too, was given 'em by God Almighty?

I F to all this it be said still, That this is against the Rule of the Apostle, who forbids the observing of Days and Times, and that it looks a little like *Judaizing*: I briefly answer, That the Reason why the Apostle dissuaded those Christians from observing Days and Times, and Months and Years, the *Sabbatical Year*, the *Weekly Sabbath*, and other *Jewish* Festivals, was because they were Types and Shadows, but the Body was of Christ; and the Substance being come, to retain them was a kind of denying, at least not an acknowledging of the Truth of the Gospel.

214 S E R M O N X.

AND as for all little *Jewish* Scruples and Severities, we know them not: This Church, and the Church of Christ, has no such Custom:

IF yet it be farther argued, that This Day is no more holy than other Festivals of the Church, appointed by the same Authority: I answer again briefly, That besides this is more antient, more universal: Nay, the Days of Local Saints and Martyrs, more antient than those of the Apostles themselves; which occasion'd the different Dates of their Martyrdoms; being taken up some time after, as a piece of Justice and Decency, that when less Saints were so honour'd, the Apostles should not be forgotten: Besides, (I say) that this is more antient, there is certainly some distinction to be made between our Saviour, and the best and greatest of his Servants; and our Lord's Day more honourable than that of St. *Paul's* or St. *Peter's*. Not that Those be therefore slighted, but that Men make not them an Argument, or rather a Pretence only, for This to be neglected. In a word, as to the publick, I am sure we are oblig'd; and as to the private, I conclude with the Apostle; *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth plenteously*

# S E R M O N X. 215

*plenteously shall reap plenteously : With this, That our Piety be as free from Superstition, as our Charity ought to be from an Opinion of Merit.*

I E N D all with that short Prayer annex'd by the Church to the Fourth Commandment, by which we surely mean something, unless we mock and dissemble both with the Church, and with God Almighty. *Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law. Forgive us our Neglects and Prophanations of thy Holy Days and Seasons, set apart and consecrated to thy Service and Worship ; and give us Grace to spend them hereafter more to our own Comfort, to the edifying one another, and to Thy Praise and Glory. Amen.*





# SERMON X.

Alas, how few are the true converts! With this  
 that our hearts be as free from supersti-  
 tion, as our consciences ought to be from an  
 Opinion of Man.

I say all with that those that are  
 agreeable to the Gospel to the Jewish Com-  
 mandments, by which we truly receive some-  
 thing, which we make and dissolve both  
 with the Church, and with God Almighty.  
 I say, that many of us, and indeed our  
 hearts, are kept in sin. Forgive us our sins,  
 O Lord, and Proprietors of thy Holy Day  
 and Kingdom, for thy sake, and converted to thy  
 Father and Father, and give us Grace to  
 keep them from falling more to our own Comfort,  
 to the glory of our Father, and to thy praise  
 and glory. Amen.



SER-



# SERMON XI.

LUKE XXII. 19.

*This do in Remembrance of Me.*



**A**FTER so many excellent Discourses that have been written and publish'd; and so many excellent Sermons that have been preached on this Subject, it is strange and wonderful, and sad and lamentable to consider, how this Holy Sacrament is scarce more duly administer'd, than (I had almost said) as duly, but as constantly neglected; and (I am afraid) we shall see an Instance of it, as soon as I have finish'd this Discourse: *The Hour (I doubt) is now coming, when (as our Lord told his Disciples) you will leave him alone; and be scatter'd almost every one of you to your particular Concerns. I dare not hope to stay you by any thing that I can offer, and yet I could almost wish*

with that such Persons (and such Persons I hope there are many in this Religious Assembly) that live pious, virtuous, and regular Conversations, would make a stand, and consider before they depart; and could they but recollect, and stir up their Devotion, and come humbly and piously, I am verily persuaded, they should yet please God, better by their Stay, than their Departure. But if this may not be (and yet I am loth to part with it, and can hardly forbear wishing, that it might be, if possible; and such Persons could be so persuaded;) but if they cannot, I shall endeavour yet to prevail with 'em for the future; that this great, and solemn, and most indispensable Duty, this dying Command of our Crucify'd Lord and Saviour, may not be so easily forgotten, and so frequently neglected. To which purpose I shall,

I. S H E W that it is our Duty to receive the Sacrament frequently.

II. H O W we ought to live, that we may receive it frequently.

III. T H E great and many Benefits of frequent receiving.

I. T H A T

**I, THAT** it is our Duty to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, I would say constantly; but I shall content myself to say frequently. And in so plain a Case, there is no need of urging every Argument; a few will serve to shew the Duty, and therefore I shall insist only on these general Considerations.

**1. THE** Respect we owe to the Primitive Church.

**2. THE** Obedience we owe to the present Church.

**AND, Thirdly,** Our infinite Obligations to our most blessed Lord and Saviour.

**1. THE** Respect we owe to the primitive Church, to the Practice of the Apostles and their Disciples, to the Example of the first and best Christians. It may reasonably be suppos'd, that such Persons as were alive when a Law was first made, and were acquainted with the Law-Maker, were intimate, near and dear to him, were chosen his chief Ministers, were commanded to take care of the Law, and who were to manage his whole Government in his



his Stead, and in his Absence, should be likely the best to understand the Meaning of the Law, and the Intention of the Lawgiver. And this was the Case of the Apostles; nay, they had not only all human and common Means of knowing the Will of Christ, but were assisted and guided by a divine, by his own infallible Spirit. Now it is plain they made this Sacrament, and left it to the Disciples, a constant part of publick Worship; nay, it may seem to have been a principal; for it is said in their Acts, that *upon the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread*; as tho' this had been one of the chief Ends of their religious Assemblies; for so most interpret *breaking of Bread*; and were it only a common Meal, it had not been worth the notice or mention of the Holy Spirit. Now as the Apostles made this Sacrament a standing Part of Christian Worship, so the Christian Church receiv'd it, and observ'd it most religiously; and not only for a while, or during the Time of the Apostles, or their more immediate Successors, but for several Ages after, at least four or five hundred Years, as may be shewn by good Authority; by such as we cannot question, by such as we hold our very Religion; and this not only in particular

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ticular Churches, but all the World over,  
 or universally. Infomuch, that when it  
 began to be difus'd or neglected, the Ob-  
 servation of it was reviv'd by strict and  
 severe Canons; and such of the Faithful as  
 came to Church to hear the Scriptures or  
 Sermons, and join'd in the publick Pray-  
 ers, and stay'd not to receive the holy Sa-  
 crament, were declar'd to be excommuni-  
 cated. And whatever we think of it now,  
 such a dreadful Excommunication, so so-  
 lemnly denounc'd by the Church, may  
 reach farther than we imagine, and be in  
 full Force and Power as long as the Church  
 itself continues. However, it is very  
 strange, when Men pretend so great Reve-  
 rence for the primitive Catholick Church,  
 they should shew so little Regard to such  
 a primitive, catholick, and apostolical In-  
 stitution. This Sacrament was observ'd  
 (as on other Days, so) especially on the  
 Lord's-Day, and that constantly; and  
 there is something in it more peculiar,  
 which we have not for the other, the plain  
 and expresse Command of our Saviour;  
 and for the Manner of observing it, we  
 have the same Practice of the Apostles,  
 and the whole Church for many Ages,  
 and the Reasons of both alike. We have  
 as much Cause to remember and adore our  
 blessed Saviour, for the Love and Kind-  
 ness

ness of his Passion, as for the Glory of his Resurrection. And when the Reasons of both are the same, and both founded on the same Authority, by what Rule is it that This is still observ'd, and That neglected? Are we not partial in our Judgment? And have we not God's Commandments, like the Persons of Men, some in Esteem, and some in Neglect? But hearken (my beloved Brethren) did not our blessed Lord and Saviour make This Law as well as That, and doth he not care for both alike? What our Lord and his Apostles, and the Catholick Church, have join'd together, it is dangerous for any Man, or any Church to put asunder. And, Thanks be to God, this Church hath not done so, but testifies, by appointing the Communion-Service to be read every Lord's-Day, and every Festival, that at all Times of publick Worship, it is her Will and Desire, there should always be a Sacrament; and therefore, besides the Respect we owe to the Primitive, we should consider, in the second Place, the Obedience we owe to the Present Church, to her pious Rules and Constitutions. I confess this does not amount to a strict and direct Injunction; it is not so much requir'd by the Church as recommended; the Hardness of Mens Hearts would not suffer

# SERMON XI. 223

suffer her to give this Precept: But tho' it be not a Command, it is a sufficient Intimation of her Good-Will and Pleasure; and as in itself a reasonable, so would it be to her a grateful and a most acceptable Service: But, thro' long Disuse and Neglect, she is almost in Despair, and does not expect it in all Places; tho' (Thanks be to God) in many, she rejoices to see it restor'd, in some to a Constancy, in more to a great Frequency; and would (I doubt not) be universal, were there but any the least Hopes it would be even tolerably regarded: But to have it, and have it slighted, were neither Wisdom in her, nor Piety. However, in such Places, where it is either constantly, or very frequently observ'd, and where a competent Number of Communicants may be suppos'd and reasonably expected, to see it neglected so continually, is a Sign of great Prophaneness, both a Contempt of the Church's Care, and of her Wisdom and Authority. I am very well aware, that in an Age of such Licentiousness, to talk of the Church's Power, is the way to expose her to more Contempt: Men are come to think she has none at all, that they are left to their perfect Liberty, either to obey or disobey, not at their Peril, but their Pleasure. And this Notion has proceeded



ceeded farther too, than (I doubt) some Men intended, and has weaken'd the Civil Power as much, and made it so loose and precarious, that if it go on after this manner, Men will in Time have no more Apprehension of Treason or Rebellion, than they have of Schism or Heresy. But whatever some Men think, there is a Church, and will be a Church, and a Power in that Church too, against which all the Powers of Earth shall never be able to prevail: And this Power is ordained of God too, no less than the temporal; and such as resist or despise it, will *receive to themselves Damnation*. It is certain the Holy Scriptures abound with as plain Precepts, and as strict Commands of all Subjection to our Spiritual as Civil Governors, *to obey those who rule over us in the Lord, to esteem them very highly*: Nay, it is the plain Design of the Gospel more peculiarly to establish and secure their Authority. And is it not strange then, that Men should think they are left to their own Discretion? That the Church's Advice and Admonition, whether it be either observ'd or neglected, it is all one and indifferent? From those who have renounc'd her, and cast off all Obedience, nothing less is expected; but those who continue in their Duty, should pay her the

the more Observance, should shew her double Honour, and fill up what is wanting to her in the others Disobedience. They should be the more concern'd and zealous, that she may not, through their Negligence, seem to have been justly deserted. Did Men but really consider, how many and great Prejudices they bring upon Religion, by making so light of the Church's good Orders and Constitutions; how they offend the Weak and Ignorant, perverting them by their Practice, and making them imagine these Things to be of little or no Consequence; how they offend the Strong and Knowing, and tho' they do not pervert, yet disturb and grieve them by their Folly and Obstinacy; and what Occasion they administer to all manner of Adversaries to reproach and blaspheme; they would not think these Things so trivial, but of great Worth and Weight, and would perceive them to be plain Matters of Duty and Conscience.

AND besides the Disrespect to the Church, what is worse (if any thing can be worse) it is the greatest Ingratitude. There are many pious and devout Persons that would be exceedingly thankful to God Almighty, for such constant Means and Occasions of receiving the blessed Sa-

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trament; and tho' they do not envy those who enjoy, yet they cannot but blame and pity those who neglect such Opportunities; and had their Lot fallen to them in such a Place, they should have thought it the chief Advantage, and the greatest Blessing of their Inheritance. And most unworthy sure are those Persons then, and strangely insensible of their Happiness, that when they may constantly, or very frequently, will very seldom be persuaded to partake of so great a Benefit. And yet were they depriv'd of it, they would perhaps be ready themselves to wish for it, and would think it a most inestimable Felicity.

BUT *Thirdly*, As the Respect we owe to the Primitive Church, and the Obedience we owe to the present Church ( in this, and all Things of Faith and good Practice, most truly Primitive and Apostolical ) so our infinite Obligations to our Blessed Lord and Saviour, may yet more powerfully persuade us to the frequent Practice of this Duty. He has not only rescu'd us from a State of most exquisite, inconceivable, and endless Misery; but has restor'd us to a Capacity of as great, or ( if possible ) of greater, more exquisite, and more inconceivable Joy and Happiness.

# S E R M O N XI. 227

ness. And the Price that he paid too, was as great as the Redemption. The cruel Mockings and Scourgings, the Shame, Pains, and Torments of the Cross, were but a light Affliction, not to be compar'd with the heavy Wrath of God, with his Father's Anger and Displeasure, when he laid on him the Chastisement of the whole World's Iniquities; which none but the Son of God could bear, and none but the Son of God could expiate. Could it have enter'd into the Hearts of Men, could they have been able to imagine or conceive such a kind of Atonement or Reconciliation, as that God should part with his Son, that his Son should part with his Glory, and endure such Grief and Misery; they could not have wish'd or desir'd, they could not have hop'd or expected; but must have given over all Thoughts, and for ever despair'd of being pardon'd or reconciled.

AND does not such strange and wondrous Kindness deserve to be frequently remember'd? Can we too often, can we often enough admire and adore such ineffable Love and Charity? Is once or twice in a Year, upon some set and solemn Occasion, more out of Custom than Devotion, for Company more than Religion; is this just, is this

Q 2

equal,



equal, is it fair, is it tolerable? Can we from Week to Week, and from Month to Month, or for much longer Seasons, behold our Blessed Saviour (like the Traveller in the Parable that fell among Thieves) robb'd, stripp'd, and wounded, and all bleeding on the Altar; and with the inhuman Priests and *Levites*, turn aside still, and go away, nor pour a Tear into his Wounds, those Wounds too, which he suffer'd for our Sins and Iniquities? Pitiless *Jews* we are, or may be, but no good Christians, nor good *Samaritans*. If without taking up, and bearing the Cross, we cannot be his Disciples; what are we without remembring, without so much as taking notice of it, or bearing it in our Memories? For we cannot imagine, that thinking or reflecting on the Sufferings of our Saviour, is a sufficient Remembrance of his Death and Passion; any more than the *Jews* meditating or discoursing of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, had been keeping or observing of the Passover. Men are apt to satisfy themselves that they do frequently remember, and do seldom or never forget the Death of our Blessed Lord and Saviour; but they do seldom remember it in that way which he has appointed; and the oftner they think of it, the oftner they must think too of their Neglect of his Institution.

stitution. And after all, it is to be fear'd, they do not even think of it so frequently, or not so piously, as they should, not so devoutly and affectionately ; if they did, there were no need of Arguments to exhort and persuade 'em, it were almost impossible to keep 'em from the Sacrament. The serious Consideration of his infinite Love and Kindness in dying for 'em, would never suffer 'em to lose any Opportunity of testifying their Sense of it, and acknowledging their Gratitude : They would be *shewing forth his Death till he come*, with that holy Care and Zeal, as tho' they knew he was just a coming.

BUT I need not insist on a Case, which I am verily persuaded, that all Men, of any Piety, will allow to be just and reasonable ; which ev'n those who do not observe it, cannot deny yet to be their Duty, are ev'n asham'd and troubled for their frequent Omissions ; and do wish with all their Hearts they could so order their Lives and Conversations, as that they might receive it oftner, or (to use the Words of the Psalmist) *That their ways were made so direct, that they might always observe this Statute*. And therefore, for their sake, for their Instruction and Encouragement, I proceed to the next Particular.

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II. T o shew how we are to live, that with Safety, and to our Comfort, we may frequently receive the Sacrament. And that I may not distract your Minds, or disturb and burthen your Memories with too nice, or too many Rules; I shall only lay down these Two general and comprehensive Directions.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, T H A T we do constantly (as far as our Human Infirmities will suffer) live godly, and righteous, and sober Lives and Conversations.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, A N D that when we address to the Sacrament, we raise and excite our Devotion, and stir up the Grace that is in us, by holy Prayers, and Meditations on the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour. And I see not, why such a Life and Devotion should not satisfy; I doubt not but it does satisfy many very good Christians.

I B E G I N with the first, that the best, and indeed the only means of being prepar'd and qualify'd to receive the Sacrament frequently, is a constant Care and Endeavour to live godly, righteous, and sober Lives and Conversations.

A N D

AND this indeed is not only the best Preparation to this sacred Office, but to all other Duties of Religion. If we live well, we shall hear well, shall be serious and attentive, shall be willing to believe, shall be ready to obey; shall be convinc'd, persuaded; not only pleas'd or satisfy'd, but learn, improve, and be really edify'd. If we live well, we shall pray well, with Affection and Devotion; without Doubts and Distrusts, without secret Exceptions, without mental Reservations; with a clear and free Desire that God would grant our Petitions. Whereas if we live ill, we shall either hear very carelessly, as never intending to practise; or hardly and difficultly, as unwilling to believe Things against our Inclinations; or vainly and idly, to the pleasing of our Fancies; or severely and censoriously, to the passing a Sentence, a Judgment on the Speaker, and a worse upon ourselves, for hearing the Word of God so foolishly and prophanelly. And so again, if we live ill, we shall pray ill; our Thoughts will either wander, or be afraid to mind and attend to our Petitions; we shall be jealous, and tremble to think of their Success. And thus whilst we live ill, and so do mean to continue, our Prayers



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and Sacrifices will be an Abomination to ourselves, as well as to God Almighty.

AND this is the plain Case too, in receiving the Sacrament, especially in frequent or constant Communicating. If we daily live in the Fear of God Almighty, in a due Sense and Reverence of his infinite Majesty, in the Fear of his Name, and in the Love of his Service, of his Days and Seasons, of his Courts and Sanctuary ; if we pay him our Morning and Evening Sacrifice ; and, according as he has blessed us with Leisure and Opportunity, do return his Kindness to us in Free-will Offerings ; if we bear to all our Brethren unfeigned Love and Charity, and the very Name (sure) might teach us even the tenderest Affection ; if we do them any Kindness, when it is in our Power ; and when it is in our Power, never do them any Injury ; if we rejoice in their Welfare, and are pleas'd with their Happiness ; if we pity, condole, if we are as glad as themselves to relieve their Distresses ; if we keep a constant Guard on our Desires and Appetites, and restrain 'em within the Bounds of Temperance and Sobriety ; if not only in our Enjoyments, but in our Qualities and Endowments, we are sober and temperate ; chaste and modest in our  
own

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own Thoughts and Opinions ; if tho' rich in the World, and come to great Honour, we are low yet in Mind, and poor yet in Spirit ; if we walk humbly with God, and friendly with our Brother, and more humbly, yet a great deal more humbly with ourselves : As the *Ethiopian* said to *Philip*, *Sec, here is Water, what doth hinder me to be baptiz'd ?* So, here is Holy Bread and Wine, and what doth hinder, what indeed doth not encourage us to communicate ? The kindest Invitation, the Promise of Acceptance, the most inestimable Blessings ! and as for strict Worthiness, that is not to be expected, neither here, nor hereafter. We shall not be worthy to drink of the Fruit of this Vine, even when we come to drink it new with our Lord in his Kingdom. But tho' we cannot be worthy, we may be humble, and sincere, and penitent, and devout ; we may be pardon'd and accepted ; which tho' it be not so much for ours, yet is it more for God's Glory ; which ought to be dearer to us than our own ; and since it can never be otherwise, we ought to be humbly thankful, and rest contented and satisfy'd.

BUT then, if in the second Place, to our constant Care and Endeavour to lead godly, righteous, and sober Lives and  
Conversa-

Conversations, when we address to this holy Sacrament, we add our Prayers and Devotions, our pious Meditations on the Death and Passion of our Saviour, (which when we are going to commemorate it, is hard almost to forget; it is impossible if we have any true Piety, on such a sensible Occasion, it is impossible to avoid;) if to a constant and habitual, we add a present and actual Preparation, such as we can, such as, without neglecting the necessary Duties of our Callings or Employments, we are able to compass, why should we be afraid? So long as we serve God, so long as we do well, so well at least, as we are able (to use the Apostle's Expression) why should we be terrify'd with any Amazement? For after this manner, of old Time, the good primitive Christians did constantly receive the Sacrament; they took Care to live well, and that was their Habitual; they took care to come humbly, and thankfully, and devoutly, and that was their more Solemn and Actual Preparation. And this, I take, to be much better than what is generally practis'd; a long Time of sinning, and a long Time of repenting: Not but that long and great sinning deserves and requires a longer and greater Repentance. But neither (sure) were better; and I am verily per-

# S E R M O N XI. 235

persuaded, if Men would but try once, they would find it much easier; easier to live well, than to be often and grievously sinning, and often again as grievously repenting. It is a Life, indeed, that has its Heights and Ascents, but then it has its dreadful Falls and Precipices: Whereas an even Course of Life, (tho' not sometimes transported, yet never dejected) is much more desirable; is even (I am sure) the best Preparation for the Sacrament; keeps us always, or at least, upon a little fair Warning, ready to do our Duty, with a safe and good Conscience.

I should now proceed to shew you the many and great Benefits of such a frequent or constant receiving the Sacrament: But this, requiring a full Discourse, I shall reserve to the next Opportunity. In the mean time I am persuaded, if you shall but make Tryal, and put this good Duty in Practice, your own Experience will almost prevent and supersede the Necessity of any farther Discourse: And you will find the Benefits to be more and greater, than either you, or I, are able to express. *May you consider what has been said, and God give you a right Understanding in all Things.*

S E R-







## SERMON XII.

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LUKE XXII. 19.

*This do in Remembrance of Me.*



HAVING shewn you, in a former Discourse on these Words,

I. THAT it is our Duty to receive the Sacrament frequently; and

II. How we ought to live, that we may receive it frequently. I come now in the

*Third Place, To shew you the Benefits of frequent receiving.*

WHICH I shall endeavour to comprise under these three Particulars:

I. THE

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1. T H E renewing and confirming the Pardon of our Sins and Iniquities.

2. T H E farthering and increasing of Piety and Holiness. And

3. T H E preserving and promoting of Love and Charity.

1. T H E renewing and confirming the Pardon of our Sins and Iniquities.

T H O' learned Men have been more easy and willing to agree about the Cause of eucharistical Oblations or Sacrifices, that they might possibly proceed from the very Light of Nature, be directed by Reason, and were the Products of Gratitude; yet they have always been difficult in agreeing about the Occasion, or the first Rise of Peace-Offerings, or expiatory Sacrifices. And tho' they have one while thought 'em natural, they found 'em so universally observ'd by all Mankind, in all Times, and in all Religions; yet when they consider'd the Thing itself, how unlikely that Men should imagine, when they had committed any Crime, or conceiv'd the Deity to be offended, that the slaying of a Beast should be any manner of Satisfaction, and  
not

not rather a new Crime, to take away the Life of a useful or innocent Creature ; besides too, a Satisfaction so unequal and disproportionate, as they might fear would rather incense than appease an offended Deity : When they consider'd (I say) these Things, they conceiv'd that such Sacrifices could never owe their Original to any Human Invention, but were of a much higher Extract, and of pure divine Institution, deriv'd thro' all Ages, and admitted into all Religions, by the pure Virtue and Authority of antient Tradition, and receiv'd with as much Ease almost as the Belief of a Deity.

BUT however Men have differ'd about the Cause or Original, the Practice of the Thing itself has been ever indisputable : And all Mankind have so far consented in an Opinion of the great Utility, and absolute Necessity of Sacrifices, as it may seem to have been their Judgment (to use the Apostle's Expression) that *without shedding of Blood there was no Remission*. And as this was the Sense of the *Gentiles*, so was it the plain Design, and the express Declaration of the *Jewish* Religion. All whose Worship, especially the more solemn and publick, consisted of nothing else almost but Offerings and Sacrifices ;



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all yet whose Offerings and Sacrifices deriv'd their Worth and Efficacy from this one Sacrifice of our Saviour; it was the Cross of Christ that sanctify'd both their Gifts and their Altars. Nay, it is in virtue of this Sacrifice, that the Intercession of our Saviour, in Heaven itself, is available: He is there continually shewing forth his Death to his Father, and exhibiting the glorious, or the glorify'd Marks of his Passion and Crucifixion; it is the Merit of That, which makes him so powerful a Mediator and Advocate. And if it add so great Virtue even to his own Intercession, how much more need is there of applying it to our Requests and Petitions, to all our Prayers and Supplications? Not that he is any more really offer'd up again on Earth, than he is really offer'd up in Heaven itself; his Death both here, and there, is only represented; it is not a Repetition, but only a Commemoration of his Sacrifice; which yet, to all Intents and Purposes of Grace and Pardon, is as effectual, as tho' it were actually repeated. By Faith and Repentance we are in a State of Forgiveness; and by humbly, and faithfully, and devoutly receiving the Sacrament, our Pardon and Forgiveness is confirm'd and ratify'd; it is seal'd and sign'd to us in the Blood of the  
Everlast-

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Everlasting Covenant. And is not this a very desirable; next to Heaven itself, is it not the most comfortable State and Condition? To live in Hopes of God's Favour? And, considering our many Failings and Infirmities, ought not this happy State, if possible, to be secur'd? And is there any way so efficacious, so satisfactory, as in Faith and Repentance to receive the blessed Sacrament? Is it not very dangerous, as well as grievous and troublesome, dismal and comfortless, to live in such a Condition, as we have reason to fear we are out of the Favour of God Almighty? are expos'd every Day, every Hour, every Minute, to his fierce Wrath and Anger? and liable every Moment to Everlasting Pain and Misery? Is it not a much wiser Course to cut off our Sins by Repentance, to sue out our Pardon? And for fear of Defects, not in our Pardon, but Repentance, to renew our Pardon, to get it often confirm'd, to corroborate our Hopes and our Title to Happiness? Is it not much safer, to be frequently clearing and discharging our Accounts, than to let them run and increase till we dare not look on them, till we dare not think of them, till they look ev'n formidable, till they appear almost desperate? It is an antient and pious Custom,

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from, and very much to be encourag'd, when Men are like to die, to receive the Holy Sacrament; not only to shew their Faith in Christ, and that they expect Pardon and Salvation only by the Merits of his Death and Passion; but with that holy Food and Sustainance, to strengthen their Souls for their last and long Journey, to support them in the amazing Moments of their Departure, in their short swift Passage to Eternity: But with how much less Fear and Doubt, with how much more Joy and Comfort, would they receive this blessed Sacrament, when they lye sick on their Beds, had they been us'd to receive it on their Knees at the Altar? did they know how frequently, how willingly, how chearfully they had receiv'd it, and not neglected or deferr'd it, till they were in a manner constrain'd? Every Time we receive here, is the best and most excellent, the most comfortable Preparation for our last Communion. We shall then partake of it with all Joy of Conscience; shall, with it, receive our Lord's own Absolution, Son, be of good Cheer, depart in Peace, thy Sins, tho' many, have often been pardon'd, and now are all finally and perfectly forgiven.

B U T

BUT, *Secondly*, As frequent receiving the Sacrament, assures to us the Pardon of our Sins, and keeps it fresh, in full Force and Vigor; so it confirms us in a State, in a more fix'd, settled State of Piety and Holiness. As it procures us Pardon, so it keeps us from wanting (not all, or any, for much, alas, we shall want continually, but) from wanting so great Pardon; our Sins will be less and fewer, and consequently the sooner forgiven, and upon easier Conditions. I know not whether any thing has more fatally contributed to the Decay of Piety, and Increase of Iniquity, than the Neglect of this Sacrament. It began (perhaps) in Superstition, but it has ended in Prophaneness. So long as Men were constant or frequent in the Observance of this great and holy Duty, they retain'd some kind of Temper, had some Moderation with them in sinning, observ'd a little Decency, were not so vainly, so unnecessarily lewd and vicious; it kept 'em in some Bounds: But when this good Rein of Discipline was let loose, or laid aside, they flew out into all Extravagancies, committed such heinous Sins, and liv'd in 'em continually, for which before they had been excommunicated or depriv'd of the Holy Sacrament:



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But that Fear was now over, that Shame and Disgrace was took away, and the Sacrament itself in a manner excommunicated. For I do not think that Mens Sins were so much the Occasion of disusing the Sacrament, as the Disuse of the Sacrament was the Occasion of their Wickedness. To salve this Disgrace, that, by so shameful Neglect, was cast on our Lord's Institution, the Church of *Rome* found an Expedient, that, at least, the Priest who consecrated should always communicate; a Practice as senseless as their Doctrine of Transubstantiation: For what was this to the People? unless by another Miracle, the People were chang'd into the Priest that consecrated, and receiv'd the whole Sacrament too by way of Concomitancy. But besides the Vanity of such Practice (not to say the Arrogancy, that the Priest should be always, and all the rest of the Church so very seldom, worthy to communicate) what did this signify? Did the People come prepared, and what need of Preparation? For to see a Sacrament which they did not receive, was like hearing a Language which they did not understand: Whereas, if instead of Expedients, which are only like Commutations, instead of Penance and Duty, and serve for nothing but to elude good Laws  
and

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and Constitutions; if instead of Mens Devices, our Lord's Commands were observed; there were no need of such solitary, very solitary, (indeed) and sad, and melancholy Communions: To see a Priest receive by himself, as tho' he alone were oblig'd to be good and pious, and the rest might go on with their Sins and Wickedness. For tho' this should not be, yet, I doubt, it is often the Construction that People make of this Practice; and I doubt too, many others, who disapprove of the Practice, are yet of the same Opinion; and for this very Reason, do often avoid the Sacrament, that they may go on in their Sins, with the more Ease and the more Liberty; which is certainly a very great and most dangerous Mistake. And tho' there be no beating Men out of it, but they keep it like a Fortrefs, which they have now held so long, they think it almost impregnable, yet is it all built and founded on Rubbish and Ruins; so far from a Fortrefs, it is a Mine of all Misery; and they will find themselves, when the Charm of this World is over, it was all Witchcraft and Magick, and most diabolical Illusion.

FOR it is sure a very idle, and a very wicked Conceit, to think that neglecting

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a plain Duty, for which we can have no Excuse, unless Sin be an Excuse, and if it excuse our Duty, it may excuse our Damnation; it is in vain (I say) to think that abstaining from the Sacrament, can give us any the least Leave or License to continue in a Course of Wickedness. There is no such Thing to be had; all the Wit on Earth, and all the Subtilty in Hell, and all the Wisdom in Heaven itself, cannot give us any such Liberty.

'Tis true, indeed, Men take it, and think they have it, and as easily as they could desire, only by keeping away from the Sacrament; and then fancy with themselves, their Sins are their own, and they may now be wicked at pleasure; and the longer they keep away, they think they have so much the longer time to be wicked: And thus, as some of old, out of Ignorance or Superstition, or out of Love and Affection to their Lusts and Vices, delay'd their Baptism, they would delay the other Sacrament till their sick or Death-Beds, till they were past Hopes or Fears, not only of sinning any more, but of living religiously: For this is what they would avoid; but this is not to be avoided, to this they are already oblig'd by their Baptism; and their wilful Violation,

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lation, and Neglect, and Forgetfulness of that, can never be extenuated by their Neglect of this Sacrament. It is true, indeed, it lays upon them stronger Obligations, and ties 'em faster, and binds 'em closer on their Conscience: But these are happy, eligible, and desirable Obligations, such as they ought to be glad of, even for this very Reason, because they defend, and secure, and ward 'em against a great many Temptations. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil, will be less active and solicitous, when they find 'em under such powerful, such indispensable Engagements to Virtue and Religion: Whereas, when they are loose, they are theirs almost without a Temptation. Nor does it only oblige and engage Men to Duty, but where it is piously and devoutly receiv'd, it gives Strength and Grace, and wonderful Assistance, and enables them to perform and fulfil their Obligations. And the oftener they receive, their Graces are confirm'd, renew'd, and replenish'd; and they get still more Vigor, have warmer and stronger Inclinations to Piety, and weaker, and cooler, and fainter Desires; have scarce any natural, no moral Propensions and Affections to Wickedness: By frequent or constant tasting of this heavenly Manna, (this Food, not of Angels;



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for Angels themselves never tasted such heavenly Food) they have lost all relish, have no Sense of these sinful Delights and Satisfaction; were they not unlawful, they should yet despise 'em as tasteless and insipid.

BUT now, this Habit of Piety is not to be acquir'd by a few single Acts, and these so wide, at such a Distance, they can never reach, or have any Effect or Influence on one another; by now and then repenting and receiving the Holy Sacrament, with such great Spaces between, and long Intervals of Sin and Wickedness. These are such Gulphs, as that we read of betwixt Heaven and Hell, so broad, deep and dreadful, that our good Acts cannot pass over; but ev'n tremble at the Attempt; are afraid they shall be swallow'd up, and perish, and be all lost for ever.

WERE the Business of our Lives, only sorrowing, and repenting; and resolving, and forgetting, and breaking our Resolutions; and sorrowing, and resolving again, we might then perhaps imagine, that these Fits and Returns of Devotion might satisfy: But since our Business is a constant, and (setting aside Infirmities, and unavoidable

unavoidable Human Frailties) an uninterrupted Course of Piety; since we are oblig'd to serve God in true Righteousness and Holiness all the Days of our Lives; we cannot chuse a better Method, nor take a more effectual Course, than frequently, very frequently to receive this Holy Sacrament. By this means we should hardly have Time or Opportunity, should ev'n scarce be at leisure to be foolish, or vicious: The Remembrance of the Sacrament, we but so lately receiv'd, the Consideration of receiving it again so very suddenly, would certainly restrain us, and keep us (by God's Grace) from a great many Follies and Vanities. And tho' some may be afraid, that this might bring the Sacrament into Disesteem and Contempt, yet I rather hope the contrary; and that the Sacrament would get the better of our Sins, than our Sins of the Sacrament. As for those Texts of Scripture, by which so many have been long terrified, of *Eating and Drinking unworthily*, and *Eating and Drinking our own Damnation*; you have them both explain'd, and stated in a short and full Treatise, entituled, *A Persuasive to Frequent Communion*, by our late worthy Primate. I must not take Things from him, and there is no saying any thing after so excellent a Writer. All I shall ob-

serve

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serve is, That as some out of Fear, whom he there satisfies, so (I doubt) others out of Pretence, are still urging these Texts of Scripture; and (I doubt too) are not a little pleas'd with the Excuse: And were there but two such other Texts about Prayers and Sermons, as, that he who hears unworthily, hears to his own Damnation; and he who prays unworthily, prays to his own Damnation, (as most certainly he does) they would as rarely come to Church, as they do now to the Sacrament; once or twice in a Year, upon some great and solemn Festival.

BUT I proceed to the *Third* Particular. As frequent receiving the Sacrament would be a means of preserving and confirming us in all Piety and Holiness; so would it mightily conduce to the restoring, the preserving, and the increasing of our Love and Charity. And never since the first Institution of this Sacrament, was there greater Want and Scarcity, nor yet greater Need and Necessity of this Divine Grace and Virtue, than in this World, this Kingdom, this State, (I am sorry I must add too) this Church, of miserable Schisms and Divisions. As the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries were stiled the Dark Ages, so without Breach of this Virtue,  
may

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may this be filed the Uncharitable. A Man can hardly think of it, without running the Hazard of forfeiting his own Charity: Even this very Sacrament, the Bond of Peace and Unity, is perversly made an Instrument of irreconcilable Separations; is used to strengthen, not only our Religious, but to confirm and secure our very Civil Divisions. And when these Things will have an end, and what will be the End of these Things, none knows (and 'tis well perhaps, that none does) but God Almighty.

It is an antient well known Saying, and a very ingenuous Confession, That, of some Heathens, tho' to their own Reproach and Infamy; "Behold, how these Christi-  
 "ans do love one another! how ready to  
 "all Offices of Good Nature and Human-  
 "nity! to visit the Sick, to relieve the  
 "Needy, to cloath the Naked, to comfort  
 "the Afflicted! how kind to their Ene-  
 "mies, their Betrayers, and Persecutors!  
 "as tho' they were their Friends, their Pre-  
 "servers, their Deliverers, and their best  
 "Benefactors!" And this wondrous Charity as they first learn'd by the Precepts and Commands of their excellent and most holy Religion; so they preserv'd it by nothing more, than by frequently parta-  
 king



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king of this Holy and Blessed Sacrament. This kept the Flame alive ; and like that of old on the Altar, it never expired ; but burnt Day and Night continually : But with the first Christian Church ( as with the first *Jewish* Temple ) this Holy Fire went out ; like that, retir'd to Heaven, to the Place from whence it first descend- ed : Never to be kindled again, never, in probability, by any means, but by attending on the Altar, to be recover'd. This, if any thing, would retrieve the true Spirit of Love and Charity. It is almost impossible, when we have all on our Knees together, been begging Pardon for our Sins ; and not only for our own, but for the Sins of one another ; and have been all graciously receiv'd, and all join'd and included in the same Act of Oblivion ; and upon the same Cautions and Conditions, upon the same Promises and Protestations, of being all good Friends ; it is almost impossible, we should have none for one another, unless for ourselves too we have no Love nor Charity. As common Fears and Dangers, so common Escapes and Deliverances, are apt to unite and endear Mens Affections ; having been all in a Storm, and in danger of being shipwreck'd, and by God's Grace and Mercy, all wonderfully escap'd together ; how can we but rejoice  
and

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and congratulate our mutual Deliverance, be almost as glad of one another's, as of our own Preservation? How can we but thank God, for his infinite Mercy to us all, in Christ Jesus? Can we longer retain our little peevish Animosities? Can we be angry with those, to whom God is reconcil'd? Can we be displeas'd against those, with whom God is well satisfied? I am verily persuaded, (and should I be mistaken, it is a charitable Error, but I hope I am not mistaken,) I am verily persuaded, that never any Man rose from the Sacrament, but full of Love and Good Will; with a great deal of Kindness and Affection, especially towards those who had partaken with him in the same Communion: And the chief Reason, why all this Kindness does not last so and continue, is because they come hither so seldom; because they stay so long again, before they renew their holy Acquaintance and Conversation.

STRISES and Contentions, Disputes and Differences, tho' they should least of all, yet do usually most arise amongst Neighbours; with others at a Distance, they have little or no Concerns, and consequently less Matter or Occasions of Difference. And therefore it is a wise Constitution,

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tution, to make those who live near together, of the same Church or Assembly; and not to have Congregations of scatter'd and dispers'd Christians, as tho' we liv'd in a Persecution. And this is a most excellent Means of preserving Love and Friendship, where (it seems) it is most difficult: For tho' when we communicate, we are in Love and Charity with all Mankind, yet we have naturally more Concern, and a greater Kindness for those, with whom we have receiv'd the Sacrament. And if this were more frequently done, I should well hope that it would put an end to many Feuds, or at least would abate their Violence: If it did not shorten, it would sweeten, yet, and soften our Differences. We might differ in some Matters, and yet all the while be good Friends and good Christians: Nay, even better than if we differ'd not, by shewing so much Charity, and meekly bearing with one another's Infirmities. These, and many more than I can mention, would (I hope) be the happy Effects of our frequent Communion.

AND thus I have finish'd this Discourse. To all which perhaps it will be objected, that Men have not time to receive so frequently. But what is the meaning now  
of

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of this Objection? Have they not Time to live well? Have they not Time to do their Duty and serve God, in their Stations? Have they not Time to live honestly, and civilly, and soberly? Nay, have they not Time if they please, to live piously and religiously? What Trifles are these? I am ashamed to answer, and themselves will be ashamed too another Day of making such Objections. If they want Time, rather than want it, they should tear it from their Business; and yet there is no need of that, they may borrow it of their Pleasures; and yet there is no need of that, they may take it from their Sins, and have less Time to be wicked, and more Time to be religious. There are, perhaps, some other Objections (and when Men have no mind to do their Duty, there is no end of their Scruples;) but thus much to them all in general: Let any Man but examine them, and then examine his own Conscience, and he will find his chief Objections to be only Sloth and Idleness, a Love of his Ease, or a Love of his Sins, a too great Fear of a little Pains and Trouble; and too little Fear of eternal Pains and Torment.

BUT that I may fix this great Duty, and not leave it at Uncertainties, I shall be more plain and particular, and shall

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humbly



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humbly offer you this Advice and Direction. Those who are much at leisure, and have no great Impediments of worldly Affairs and Business, I do heartily wish they would constantly; and those who have more Avocations, I could heartily wish yet, that these would frequently receive the Sacrament: To be yet plainer, and more particular; I humbly advise and wish heartily, They would resolve on a Weekly, and These on a Monthly Communion. To whom much is given, of them much is required; and to whom less is given, of them less is expected.

I HAVE but one Thing more to add, (or what I have said may come to nothing) That according to your several Conditions and Circumstances, you do make your Resolutions presently, and speedily; even this very Day, if possible, this good Hour; if possible, by the Grace of God, even this very Moment. And having fix'd your Design, and call'd upon God for his Assistance, resolve again, that by his Grace you will keep your Resolutions. And because Prayer to Almighty God is ever the best Application, I shall conclude all with a good Collect, very apposite to this Discourse, and very instructive of our Duty.

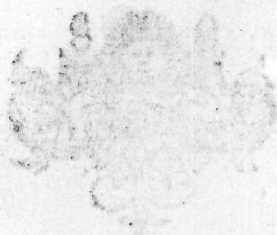
*Second Sunday  
after Easter.*

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**Duty.** *Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Ensamble of godly Life; give us Grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the Blessed Steps of his most holy Life, thro' the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



Unhappy God, who has given this  
 only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for  
 sin, and also an Example of good life;  
 we are bound to love him with all our heart,  
 and to follow him in his inestimable blood;  
 and to keep his commandments, that we may  
 abide in him, and his love may be perfected  
 in us, that we may have the fruit of his  
 love, which is eternal life, Amen.





## SERMON XIII.

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JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

*But as for me and my House, we will  
serve the Lord.*

**I**NTEND, from these Words, to discourse to you very plainly and practically, concerning a most necessary Christian Duty, tho' I fear too generally, or too frequently neglected: I mean the daily Use of Morning and Evening Prayer in your Families. To which Purpose I shall,

I. FIRST, Briefly shew you that this is a Christian Duty.

II. I shall lay before you the many and great Benefits of a constant and conscientious Observance of this Duty. And,



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III. THE many and great Mischiefs of neglecting this Duty.

IV. I shall consider and answer the Objections, or the Pretences and Excuses that are commonly alledg'd, either for the total or too frequent Neglect of this Duty.

ALL which I shall, in the last Place, conclude with some Application,

FIRST, therefore, to shew you that this is a Christian Duty. I shall not, and I need not, be either large or laborious in the Proof of so plain a Case, and shall use but this one Argument; That every Christian is oblig'd, in his Place and Station, to promote the Interest of Religion, and the Service of God Almighty. A Prince in his Dominion, a Bishop in his Diocese, a Priest in his Parish, and a Master in his Family, they are all, in their several Places, God's Ministers and Stewards, and must render an Account to him of their Stewardship and Ministry. Their Power, Interest, Pre-eminence, and Authority, was not given them for their Ease and Pleasure, for their Greatness and Glory, but for the Welfare of Mankind, and for the Honour of God Almighty. And if  
he

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he be worse than an Infidel that provides not, in Things temporal, for those of his own House, what is he that has an Household and a Family of Infidels? That live without God, without any manner of Religion. What does he, that Day and Night never calls on his Creator, that never worships his God; what does he but deny the Faith every Morning and Evening? Nor is it enough that he pray (if yet he do pray) in private; this is short of his Obligation; and is not the Piety of a Father, or a Master, but of an Hermit or Anchorite. He had as good set his House in Order, and turn recluse, and might pray for it as well in a Cave or a Wilderness. But I need not to insist on the direct Proof of a Case so evident, which (besides, that it will plainly appear from all the following Discourse) is a Dictate of Reason, and apparent to the Light of Nature; to which, I am persuaded, your own Consciences do bear witness, excusing and acquitting you for performing this Duty; and accusing and condemning you for the Neglect.

II. I proceed therefore to lay before you the many and great Benefits of a constant and conscientious Observance of this Duty. And whatsoever is beneficial to Men, es-

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pecially to their Salvation, if they have any Love for their Souls, they will conclude to be their Duty. Now the Benefits are of several Kinds.

As, *first*, the good Order of the Family. When Morning and Evening they are all constantly brought together, to serve God, it will be a means of keeping good Hours, and living regularly. The Morning will not be spent in long and needless Sleep, or Idleness, nor the Evening in long and needless Converse, and sometimes in Sin and Debauchery: Men would rise and break up betimes, and not make both God and their Families to wait their sinful Leisure. And what a blessed World should we have, how civil, how orderly, if every Family (and I am sure there can be no Reason to the contrary) had their set Times of Prayer and Devotion, if every House were religious, and all Christians liv'd canonically.

BUT, *secondly*, As the Observance of this Duty would be a Means of bringing in good Order, so would it likewise introduce Love and Kindness into Families: It would endear them to one another, and by daily serving God together, they would live together in Unity. Who would not,  
who

# S E R M O N XIII. 263

who could chuse but love and serve those, who love and serve God Almighty? This would incline and unite the Hearts of Parents to their Children, and of Children to their Parents; of Masters to their Servants, and of Servants to their Masters; would join them even closer and firmer than all the Bands of Alliance: For the best and truest Friendships are those that are made in Religion, and no Men love so well, and so heartily, as good People. Look at any time, when you please, on those Families that are constant and regular in their Devotions, and how is there all Peace and Quietness! How justly may we say of them, as was said of the primitive Christians, Behold how these religious Families do all love one another!

*Thirdly*, B U T besides these general Benefits, there are some more peculiar to those who have the Government of Families, as Reverence and Respect, without which they will govern but ill, either too loosely or tyrannically: And there is nothing that creates, that commands Respect and Reverence, like true Piety and Religion; it is great and awful where it appears; as sacred as Majesty, I had almost said as Divinity. Of such Power and Authority, that ev'n Superiors themselves,



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stand in Awe of their Inferiors, if more virtuous and religious. And therefore, as Parents and Masters would have their Children and Servants dutiful and respectful, they must shew them the Example of their Duty and Respect to God; and then they will readily live all in the Fear of them, when they live in the Fear of God Almighty. The softest and gentlest Word, the mildest and tenderest Reproof from such a Parent or Master, will work upon them more effectually, than the Wrath or Blows of another; and they will think (sure) when they have offended so good a Father or Master, they have offended God Almighty.

*Fourthly,* As the Observance of this Duty, will make those who are under us respectful, so will it, in all Probability make them faithful and diligent: For there is nothing obliges Men to Honesty and Fidelity, so certainly, and so constantly, as a true Sense of Religion. And how can we hope to keep up a true Sense, without a constant Exercise and Practice of Religion? All Men (I am sure) would have their Servants true and trusty, careful of their Concerns, and industrious in their Business; and yet (I am sure) they will never be so, if they be not bred religiously;

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gioufly; the Fear of God would keep 'em cloſer to their Service, than all their Indentures: This alone will make 'em diligent, not contented with Eye-Service, as Men-pleaſers, but as the Servants of God, in Singlenefs of Heart, doing Duty as unto God himſelf; which will render their menial Service a kind of Divine Worſhip, and recommend all their Duties as ſo many Acts of Religion.

*Fifthly*, ANOTHER great Benefit of daily Prayers in our Families, and indeed the moſt immediate Effect of 'em, and not otherwiſe to be expected, is the Bleſſing of God Almighty on our honeſt Pains and Endeavours. When we have all call'd upon God together, and implor'd his Aſſiſtance, his Guidance in our Doubts, his Protection in our Dangers, his Bleſſing on our Undertakings, we then diſperſe chearfully, and go to our ſeveral Affairs with Pleaſure and Alacrity. If we ſucceed, we think it the good Effect of our Prayers; and if we ſucceed not, we have however this Satisfaction, that it is not a Judgment upon us, for the Neglect of our Duty. By this Means we are prepar'd and ready for all Events. Nothing can come amiſs to us, and we are never diſappointed. We have pray'd to God to proſper either the

Work

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Work of our Hands, or the Works of our Heads upon us, which if it please him to prosper, we lift them up to him again in Praise and Thanksgiving; or if not, we let fall our Hands, or lay them on our Mouths, and bow down our Heads, and submit and acquiesce, and think his Will and Pleasure to be better than Prosperity. As having not call'd upon God, and begged his Assistance, (in whose Hands are all our Ways, and who orders all Events) we cannot hope to succeed; and if we fail and miscarry, are troubled and dejected with the Thoughts of our Neglect: So, tho' we should prosper, we can find no true Relish, no manner of Comfort or Joy in our Success. It is either sent us in Anger and Displeasure, or, perhaps, it is our Portion, and all we are to expect; and whatever be the Advantage, whether of Profit or Honour, we are sure to pay for it dearly, when it stands us in the Place of Conscience, and the Favour of God Almighty.

*Sixthly*, THE last Benefit I shall mention, and of all the most considerable, is the good Effect this Duty will have on our Lives and Conversations. It will, in all probability, not only make our Families civil and orderly, kind and affectionate,  
humble

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humble and obedient, faithful and diligent, happy and prosperous, but (what is a thousand times more desirable, and ought to be our chief Care too) pious and religious: Not as tho' the Means of Grace, such as this, were always effectual; they may sometimes fail and miscarry; but yet it is more certain, that where the Means are not us'd, the Grace can never be expected. How can we hope our Families should serve God, and be religious, when we have no Service of God, nor any Religion in our Families? As to the publick Worship, besides that it is appointed, and Men know not how to avoid it, either for want of lawful Business, or for Shame and fear of Censure; or in Obedience to Authority, or in Compliance with Society; and it may seem to have prevail'd and obtain'd among People as a thing of Course and Custom: Besides this, it recurs but seldom, with so great Breaches and so wide Distances, it will never maintain any Warmth or Vigor, will hardly be able to preserve any Life or Sense of Religion. I confess, indeed, in those Places which have divine Service constantly, and Morning and Evening Prayer in the Church; this Duty here in our Families, does not seem to be so necessary; and by learned and pious Persons, is thought to be superseded,

or



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or rather, indeed, better observ'd in the publick Congregation. But this is a rare Happiness, to be enjoy'd but in few Places; and where it is, God help us, is little regarded; and were it more general, would only be the more neglected: And sure Men cannot think the publick Worship is sufficient. It is poor serving of God to rest one Day from their Labour, and all the Week besides from Religion. We should think it a hard Case, if the Sun were only permitted to rise and shine on this Day, and going hence in the Evening, should never return till this Day again, and we were to pass all the Time between in a sad and dismal Darkness; and yet this is the Pace and Measure of too many Mens Religion: And what good too can we hope from either? After so long an Absence, what Power or Influence can their Presence have? How should any thing thrive and prosper? Before either could return, all would be chill'd, and dead, and wither'd. If we therefore desire to keep this holy Flame alive, in our selves, and those of our Families, we must daily and continually be quickening and exciting it; and whatever some may imagine, this is not an easy or a light Matter. It is more our Duty and our Interest to give them a virtuous and a pious, than  
the

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the best civil Education ; else we are false to our Servants, have not taught them their Profession, the Principles of their chief Calling ; and for want of Instruction, when they are Men they will not know how to set up to be Christians. And as for our Offspring too, (tho' few will be so persuaded, but think it more Fancy, than Truth or Divinity) yet to leave them the Fear of God, to give 'em a Sense of Religion, is a much better Estate, than the largest Inheritance, and a richer Portion, than thousands and ten thousands of Gold and Silver ; and the longest Day they live too, they will have more Reason to bless our Memories. What an Honour will it be to us, to be followed and attended by such to our Long-Homes ! And what a much more immortal Honour, to be attended to Heaven, to our everlasting Habitations, by our Children and Servants whom we had shewn the Way, and brought and conducted thither ! These leading in our Hands, and those decently, and thankfully, and joyfully following ! From having here pray'd to God, and call'd upon him daily, to praise and adore him all together to Eternity !

III. I come now, in the third Place, to shew you the ill Consequences, the many  
and

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and great Mischiefs of omitting and neglecting this Duty. And tho' the Benefits of observing it, do sufficiently discover the Mischiefs of neglecting it, these being only all their Contraries; yet because the Fear of Evil, is with many as strong and prevalent as the Hope of Good, and with some stronger, I shall not barely mention, but insist and enlarge on them, to deter Men (if possible) from the Neglect of their Duty. And these are of several Sorts too, some temporal, and some spiritual; and such as together will ruin our Families both here and hereafter.

AND the first is Disorder; a Mischief, as to our civil and religious Estate and Concerns, of no very small Consequence. I confess this, indeed, is an Evil not so general, nor so incident to those of the meanest and lowest Rank, whose very necessary Occasions oblige them to be a little regular; tho' yet, without daily Devotions, this can no more be call'd a regular Life, than that of their Beasts and Cattle; and as they are Men and Christians, they live never the less irregularly. However, in those Families that are more at Leisure to be idle, and more at Liberty (God forgive us for abusing our good Leisure and Liberty to such Purposes) are  
more

## S E R M O N XIII. 271

more at Liberty to be wicked; the Neglect of this one Duty, is the Occasion of most of their Disorders: And for want of this, we may observe, and it is so apparent an Observation, we may do it without being curious or inquisitive, that in too many Families, they have inverted the Course of Nature, and live like so many *Antipodes*. How prejudicial to their worldly Interest, which oftentimes goes to Ruin; how much more prejudicial to their eternal Salvation, which to be sure goes to wreck, and will in the End come to nothing; they find when it is too late, and they are undone past Recovery. The loss of so much good Time in Sloth, and the Mispenfe and Abuse of so much more in Sin and Vanity, will be a dismal Reflection (when Time itself shall be no more) in a miserable Eternity: Not as tho' we abridg'd any of their honest and just Liberty, of enjoying their Friends and themselves in pleasant and innocent Conversation; all That may be done, and This not be left undone and neglected: All That in Comparifon is but as Mint, Annis, and Cummin, which tho' it ought to be paid, yet it should not be a Pretence for omitting our weightier Duties; especially when the Observance of This, of our  
solemn



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solemn daily Sacrifices, will sanctify the other of less Value and Consideration.

*2dly*, AND as the Neglect of this Duty is the Cause of much Disorder, so is it often of Unkindness and Disaffection in Families. Love and Charity are the Gift of God, and Graces of his Holy Spirit, the Bond of Perfection, and all Virtues; which tho' he freely bestows on those who ask him, he bestows 'em not on those who think 'em not worth the asking: and whilst they live in Defiance of God, it is natural and unavoidable they should also be at Variance and Enmity with one another. And I am apt to think the Strifes and Contentions in many Families is owing to the Neglect of this Duty, their constantly serving God together. The Use of it would reconcile, and often put an end to Differences, not only from Expressions in all our Prayers and Devotions, but from the Nature of the Duty itself, a Duty so meek, and humble, and charitable: And as the Use of it would heal Breaches, and compose Divisions; so on the contrary, the Disuse and Neglect of it makes 'em wider, suffers the Wounds to rankle and fester, till they almost become incurable: till even among the nearest Relations it is sometimes thought  
suffici-

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sufficient, and very fair, if they dye in Charity.

3dly, T H E Neglect of this Duty is usually its own Punishment; and rewards us in our own kind, with Neglect from our Families. *Those who honour me, says God himself, shall be honour'd; and those who lightly esteem him, shall be little regarded.* Not that I would teach Inferiors to be disrespectful, or justify their ill Behaviour; but we teach 'em to be so our selves, and justify their Neglect of us, by our Neglect of God Almighty. 'Tis true indeed, they should pay the same Obedience and Observance to the harsh and forward, as to the good and gentle; to the Wicked and Prophane, as to the Pious and Religious; they should indeed, but they will not; and the thing itself is almost impossible: hearty it will scarce be; for after all our Distinctions and nice Separation between the Person and the Authority, Wickedness will bring them together again; and in the Eyes of most People, will render them Both contemptible. They indeed are exceedingly to blame for their Irreverence; yet it is but what we deserve; and we are no less too blameworthy for not teaching them more Manners, by teaching them more Religion.

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When

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When they see us, Morning and Evening, neglect our plain Duty, what Esteem can they have of us? If good, they will pity; if bad, they will despise: and bad they are most like to be by our bad Example.

*4thly*, As the Neglect of this Duty will rob us of our Honour, so will it in all probability hinder our Profit too, and prejudice our Interest; will make those we entrust, idle and negligent, and not only defraud us of our Respect, but their Service. It is not all our Care, or watchful Inspection, our Threats or Severities, no, nor our Encouragements, that will keep them constant to their Duty: The best Tempers and Dispositions, if they have not the Fear of God, tho' they may not go wrong, or be tempted to run astray, will yet often slacken their Pace, and abate of their Industry. In long and tedious, rough and hard Paths of Duty, nothing will keep us from tiring, but the Sense of our Duty. In so deep and heavy Ways, the most active and vigorous would too often lag and loiter, but only for the Spurs and Whips, the gentle, and sometimes the severer Lashes of Conscience. And what can They feel of this, that have none, at least no very quick Sense of Religion? Not as tho' Men should serve God  
for

# S E R M O N XIII. 275

for these poor Ends and Purposes: this is not serving of God; neither too will it hold or continue: but yet if they do not serve him, this in liklihood will be the Consequence; to have those about 'em loose and idle, false and deceitful; and if they wrong and defraud 'em not in greater Matters, to make no scruple of purloining their Time and their Service.

5thly, O R be they never so honest and diligent in their Concerns, and themselves too never so careful, yet the Neglect of this Duty is attended with another Evil, that will spoil all their Labour, and ruin all their Designs. They cannot expect or hope for the Blessing of God Almighty: And Men do not hope to thrive without it sure! They are better Heathens than so at least, if they be not better Christians. I would not be thought so vain, as to assign the Reason of God's Judgments; but it deserves to be consider'd, whether the Ruin of many Families, and more in the Compass of a few Years than of whole Ages before, be not owing in some measure to the Neglect of this good Duty? They do not, as Families and Societies, devoutly and solemnly pray to God, and beg his Favour; and why should they then look to prosper? How can the Huf-



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bandman expect a Harvest without his Grace and Blessing, *who gives both the former and the latter rain in their season?* Or the Merchant a safe Voyage, without his wondrous Providence, who alone commands the Winds, and whose Word the Sea obeys? I doubt not but many have been undone by Sloth and Idleness, and more with Excess and Luxury, but most of all yet with Impiety; more than either by an idle or profuse, have been ruin'd by an ungodly and prophane Way of living.

6thly, But this is not all, the last Mischief is yet greater; it not only brings us here to Beggary, but to the extreme Want and saddest Misery hereafter. Poor as *Lazarus* in this World, or as the rich Man in the other; to want, and yet to find no Relief and no Pity. Men please themselves with leaving great Estates to their Families; but if they breed them not religiously, and in the Fear of God Almighty, they had as good leave them to the wide World, as indeed they do to the wicked World, which is worse and more cruel, more unkind and unnatural. And as to their Servants, it is like oppressing the poor Hireling; it is defrauding them of the greatest and best Part of their Wages; that for which they came to  
us,

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us, and for which God sent them into our Service. As to Mens serving God by themselves, and their own private Devotions; for this, I doubt, is the Excuse that satisfies too many Mens Consciences: This (as I have said) is short of our Duty; and is, at best, but as a Master that provides for his own Table, and lets those of his House go shift, or starve and perish with Hunger. Besides the Danger of perishing with them, methinks it should touch his Bowels with Pity to see them perish.

WHICH brings me to the Fourth Particular, The Arguments and Objections, or rather the Pretences and Excuses that are commonly alledg'd, either for the total or too frequent Neglect of this Duty. But these are too many to repeat, and much more at this time to answer: I shall therefore refer 'em to the next: Only thus much in general: They are such as (I am sure) any Man, if he please, may answer; and many Men do answer, by their daily Practice of the Duty; and what some do, others may: Or if they think it inconvenient, and too much Pains and Trouble, they will do well to consider, whether the Thought of their Neglect will not be more inconvenient, and a great deal more

# 278 SERMON XLII.

Pains and Trouble to them hereafter. It is possible, all I have said, and all I shall say on this Subject, will not yet persuade some Men; but this I am certain, the Time will come when they will wish that they had been persuaded. May we consider what has been said, and God give us a right Understanding in all things, *To whom be all Honour and Praise, Adoration and Obedience, now and for ever. Amen.*



Which brings me to the Fourth Particular. The Arguments and Objections, or rather the Provinces and Excesses that are commonly alledged, either for the total or too frequent use of this Duty. But these are what I repeat, and much more as I shall repeat. I shall therefore refer to the former. Only this much in general: They are such as I am sure any Man in his private way of thought, and many Men do answer, by their daily Practice of the Duty; and what some do others may: Or if they think it inconsistent, and too much Pains and Trouble, they will do well to consider, whether the Advantage of their Souls will not be more convenient, and a great deal more Pains.



## SERMON XIV.

### JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

*But as for me and my House, we will  
(serve the Lord.*



**HAVE** taken Occasion from these Words, to discourse to you concerning a very necessary Christian Duty, the daily Use of Morning and Evening Prayer in your Families. And having

**FIRST** shewn you, That this is a Christian Duty: and

**SECONDLY**, Laid before you the many and great Benefits of a constant and conscientious Observance of this Duty: and

**THIRDLY**, The many and great Mischiefs of neglecting this Duty:



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FOURTHLY, I proceed in the next place to consider the Objections, the Pretences and Excuses that are commonly alledg'd for the total, or too frequent Neglect of this Duty.

THO' by the way, if it be a Duty (as I may hope has been prov'd already, and as any Man may prove to himself, that will be at the pains but to consider; and if he will not, to what purpose has he his Reason and Understanding?) all Arguments against it must be weak and inconclusive, because nothing can excuse or absolve us from our Duty; unless they could shew it is impossible, which they are not so weak as to pretend; and of which the Practice of others is a sufficient Confutation. However, some Objections there are, and (as Men have made 'em too) some Difficulties.

I. THE First and chief Excuse for their Neglect is the Fault itself, that is, the general Difuse and Neglect of this Duty. How this hath come to pass, is no hard matter to discover: We have lived our selves in an Age of great Prophaneness, and immediately succeeded an Age of great Hypocrisy; and no wonder to see this and  
many

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many other good things laid aside and discarded: It is a wonder, that betwixt these Extremes we have not quite lost our Religion.

H O W E V E R, of all Objections this is the most disingenuous: Men disuse it, because it is so generally neglected; and who are meant by this word *General*? Is it not every Particular? Does not each one, all he can, contribute to this general Neglect? Who can urge this Objection, or plead the Example of Others, but they may return it upon 'em, and alledge Their Example? A strange way of excusing a Fault, to make each other's Sin, each other's Justification! And yet this one Argument, as weak as it is, and unreasonable, that shames and confutes itself, to shew it is made up of Contradictions, is (I know not how) at the same time the strongest too, and most prevalent. Men think to shelter themselves under the general Example; and that is a very broad shield indeed, able to cover a whole Army; and the more come under it, the more it spreads too, and grows the broader. But as large as it is, it is of no Proof, nor will it bear the least Assault; nay, the larger it is, instead of sheltering, it exposes the more certainly to Danger and

Destru-

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Deſtruction. For tho' Men out of prudential Reaſons may ſometimes bear with Offenders, or perhaps pardon 'em, when very numerous; yet this is not God's Method; the greater Number of Sinners, the greater is the Provocation, and the greater, the ſurer, and the more certain is the Punishment: And therefore it is a fooliſh thing, in the Neglect of any Duty, for Men to comfort themſelves, that they ſhall fare as well as others; when (they know) they ſhall all fare alike, very ſadly and very miſerably. And yet this vain Hope (which is not ſo much Hope yet, as Deſpair; not an Anchor, but a Rock or Quickſand) is that on which half Mankind is ſhipwreck'd and caſt away. They ſhall come off as well as the reſt; tho' they are perſuaded in their Conſcience that none ſhall come off, but all periſh and be loſt for ever.

GIVE me leave to inſtance in another very conſiderable, and the moſt excellent Duty of our Chriſtian Religion, which upon this very Principle of general Example, is almoſt grown out of uſe; I mean, the conſtant, at leaſt the frequent Reception of the bleſſed Sacrament. It is a ſad Sight to obſerve, when this comes to be adminiſter'd, in what Multitudes Men depart

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depart the Church, how (like *Gideon's* faithless Army) they disband in Troops and Companies; and what a poor Number they usually leave behind 'em to attend the Service. And tho' they plead their Fears, yet it is plain, the common Excuse is the general Example, and they only follow one another. For were they but seriously asked, How they can neglect so plain a Duty? they answer, How can others do it? They are as much concern'd, and as much oblig'd to receive it often: And if it be a great Sin of Omission, they are no more to blame yet, and shall suffer no more than others. They shall not; but do they know what they and others shall suffer? Or if they know, do they think they can bear it? Are they able to suffer the heavy Wrath of God Almighty? For however in this World it may be thought some Consolation (tho' not very human or good-natur'd) to have Companions in Affliction, it will not be so in the next; and those whom we brought thither, and those whom we follow'd, will be the worst of our Tormentors: We shall then hate and tremble at the Sight of our ill Examples; shall wish we had never seen their Faces, and shall curse the Day for ever.



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*2dly*, A Second usual Excuse (and something of the Nature with the former) for the Neglect of this good Duty, is Fear or Shame of being singular: To which I have three things to answer.

AND First, That it is not so very singular; tho' not so many as we could wish, yet perhaps more than we imagine, and some that we may know (and not out of Vanity or Ostentation, but out of Duty and Conscience) do Morning and Evening pray to God with their Families. And were it less observ'd than it is, yet one Instance of the Practice is worth a thousand to the contrary; will weigh more with a wise Man to countenance and encourage, than all the World to deter or dishearten him from his Duty. This is a good, solid Argument; all the rest are idle, trifling, and insignificant.

BUT, *2dly*, Suppose Men were as singular in the Practice of this Duty as they pretend, or as they fear and suspect: What is this to the purpose? Is bare Singularity a Crime or Disparagement? In ill things it is monstrous, in little things it is foolish; in good things, it is of all the most worthy and commendable. Should any Man  
be

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be ashamed, should he not seek and endeavour to be as singular as possible in any thing that is excellent, in any thing of Advantage and Benefit to Mankind, and of Comfort to himself, and of Honour to God Almighty? The World is not grown yet to that pass, that Piety and Holiness should be thought a Disgrace; or if it be so degenerate, to be pious and holy is the greater Commendation; it loses no Credit, but gains more Esteem by being single and solitary. Had *Noah* been of this mind, and (when all Flesh had corrupted their Ways upon the Earth) been afraid of being singular, Mankind must have perished, or have had another Creation. It is not unlikely but the *Israelites*, immediately upon their Entrance into *Canaan*, might be prone to Idolatry; as it is plain they were in *Egypt*, and afterwards in the Wilderness, and after that in the Land of *Midian*: yet this Thought deterr'd not *Joshua* from declaring his Resolution, and protesting against all Idolatry: If they would go after the rest of the World, and either worship those Idols their Fathers had served in *Egypt*, or on the other side of *Jordan*, or those of the Nations whose Land they inhabited; if they would, he should not follow them, but stay behind all alone: And had they all left him by himself, he had

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had been as glorious and wonderful, as the Sun standing still on the Valley of *Ajalon*. It is a Weakness to be afraid of being singular or remarkable in Matters of Duty and Conscience: Nor are we yet alone or singular; could we open our Eyes, we should see (like the Prophet's Servant) *more with us than against us*; all good Men, alive and departed; all the holy Saints and Angels; and what is more than all, God Almighty.

ESPECIALLY, in the next place, when tho' perhaps we may be singular for the present, we may not be so long, or not always; and may bring over others to the same Duty by our Example. Just as good *Joshua's* Resolution made all the People strait declare, as one Man, and one Family, they would serve none but the God of *Israel*. And I doubt not but this very Practice has often had the same Effect; and many Persons, who either by Accident or Providence have been present at the Prayers and Devotions of other Families, have lov'd and lik'd it so well, that they have taken up the same Resolution, that they and their Houses too would thus *serve the Lord* continually; and have daily thank'd God, and blest'd and pray'd for their good Examples.

3dly,

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3dly, A THIRD usual Pretence for Mens neglecting of this good Duty, is their want of Time and Leisure. They are either in haste of their Business, or of their Work and Labour, or perhaps of their Recreations; and cannot spare so much time as to pray to God with their Families: and so go to their Work or Sports with no more Sense (alas) of Religion, than the Fellow-Creatures of their Labour, or those of their Recreation. And are these fit Excuses for Christians, Pleasures and Business? *But what will it profit a man, if he lose his own Soul?* (as he will, if he neglect his Duty) what will it profit him, tho' he could *gain the whole world*, and could spend it again in Pleasure?

BUT the Weakness of this Pretence will plainly appear, if we consider for what Things it is this Duty is so neglected. Not upon any necessary and unavoidable Occasion, but many times upon needless, and oftentimes upon such as ought (however) to be avoided. In the Evening, it is Conversation, and not always too the most innocent: and sure if it be vain and idle, especially if it be vicious, it is so far from excusing the Neglect of  
our



our Duty, that it aggravates the Sin, and makes it yet more inexcusable. It is rather a good Reason, a fair and proper Occasion, a very just Excuse to get away from ill Company. We should be glad, and thank God we have such an Engagement, that saves us many times a great deal of Folly and Vanity: Or be the Conversation never so innocent, so delightful or profitable, is not our Duty more innocent? Is not praying to God more pleasant and profitable? Is not his indeed the best, the most desirable Conversation? But this too is mere Pretence; we may answer all our Obligations of Friendship, without neglecting our Engagements to God Almighty. And upon as poor Pretences are our Morning Devotions too neglected. Men have either some urgent Affairs, or must be early about their Employments; or, it may be, they are (like Baal) *upon a Journey, or in pursuing, or perhaps they are asleep, and must (or rather must not) be awaken'd*: It were rude to disturb them, to regard or mind their Sacrifices. But tho' these are good Excuses for Gods of Stocks and Stones, are they for Men of Sense and Reason, to be so heedless of their Devotions? Do they not look like perfect Mockeries? Do they excuse? Do they not rather upbraid and expose their heathenish, prophane

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prophane Negligence? And what Affairs can Men have of such Concern and Importance, as serving God? as rendring him his due Worship and Honour, as admiring and adoring his infinite Perfections, as praising him for his Mercies, as praying for the Pardon of their Sins, and imploring his Grace and Assistance? Is not this their main Business? Ought not any, ought not all to be postpon'd or suffer, rather than this be neglected? And yet they need not suffer; a very little Consideration may so order things, that this Duty and necessary Business, like Truth and Mercy, may embrace one another. Let Men pretend what they please that they want Time and Leisure, it is rather to be fear'd they want good Will and Affection; and if that may excuse them, they might soon be absolv'd from all manner of Religion. The Truth is, and it is a Sign both of Hypocrisy and Profaneness, Men are much such Husbands of their Time, as they are of their Estate: They can spend very freely upon their Lusts and their Pleasures, and lavish it away in Riot and Excess, to maintain their Port, their Pride, or their Vanity; but upon any charitable Object or Occasion, they have nothing to spare; it comes from 'em like Drops of their Hearts Blood, as

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though their very Heart went along with their Treasure. The least Offerings here are preposterously magnify'd; and, not because they are poor, but rich and covetous, each Mite is a Talent. And thus are they at once both as frugal, and as prodigal of their much dearer Time: For mere Sloth and Idleness they have enough, and more than they can tell what to do withal: For their Gain they have more too, and can both rise up early, and late take rest, or take no rest at all, in pursuit of their Profit; nay, they have Time enough to spend upon their Pleasures, and enough for their Sins, and more than sufficeth: but for God and his Service, tho' it were to save their Souls, they have no Time to spare. Here it is all tedious; every Minute is an Hour, and every Hour is a Day; and so it goes on, and most strangely increases, and multiplies infinitely. And yet to see the Folly now of all this worldly Wisdom; the best of our Estate, and our surest Inheritance, is that which we give in Alms and Charity; and the best of our Time, and worth all our Lives besides, is that which we spend in Acts of Piety and Religion. There are some other little Scruples against the Observance of this Duty, but are either reducible to some of the former Particulars, and so are answer'd

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fwer'd already; or fuch Scruples as any  
 Man may resolve 'em himfelf, and answer  
 as faft as he can raife 'em; and neither de-  
 ferve, nor need to be diftinctly confider'd.  
 And therefore I fhall mention but one  
 more, which is the common Pretence of  
 the more ordinary fort of People; though  
 it be not fo much an Objection againft the  
 Duty itfelf, which they own, but a Dif-  
 ficulty about the Means and Ability of  
 performing the Duty. They know not  
 themfelves how to pray with their Fami-  
 lies, and know not of any Books, or good  
 Forms of Devotion. It may be fo, they do  
 not; and they do not mean to enquire;  
 but fatisfy themfelves, are contented with  
 their Ignorance, and perhaps better pleas'd,  
 and more glad of the Excufe. But veri-  
 ly do they think this Excufe will be ta-  
 ken? or pafs either with God or Man?  
 They know of no good Prayers; and can  
 they not ask? and may they not eafily be  
 informed and directed? For Heaven's fake,  
 what is it that Men imagine or expect?  
 That they have nothing at all to do? or  
 that Heaven will come to them, if they  
 do not go thither? That they need not  
*seek the kingdom of God and his righteouf-*  
*nefs,* but the things of this World; and  
 thofe in good time will be added! If they  
 take care of this Day and this Life, they  
 U 2 may



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may leave the morrow and the next Life to take care and provide for itself; and no doubt will find *the Evil thereof sufficient* to Eternity.

BUT having mention'd this Particular, that I may not only tell People of their Fault, and leave it as I found it, but may set 'em in the way of mending it for the future; for tho' they know it is their Duty to enquire, and they may be easily informed and satisfy'd, yet many (I am afraid) will not be at the Pains or Trouble of enquiring, but go on as they did, and do as they have always done already; and neglect their Duty, tho' not so much for Want, as for fear of being instructed: I shall therefore (if you know of none, and I do not know too of any better) recommend to you that excellent Form of Devotions collected out of the publick Prayers of the Church, and most excellently adapted to the Use of private Families: The Title of it is, *The Common Prayer-Book the best Companion in the House and Closet, as well as in the Temple.* And having recommended this to you, give me leave, in a few Words, to justify the Choice and Preference (above others) of these Devotions: Which I shall do, First, from the Plainness, and Secondly, from the Brevity of these Prayers or Collects.

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IT is the greatest Commendation of any Writing whatever, if good and pious, that it is plain, easy, and natural; such as all who hear, do presently understand, and had they light on those things, would have used the very same Expressions: that slides into their Minds, as tho' it came from them, and seems their own Thoughts and Sense, and in their own Words and Language. And this Plainness and easiness, as it is every where commendable, is no where more requisite than in our Addresses to God Almighty. Whatsoever in other things may be allow'd, and may sometimes be serviceable, can have no place here: Here is no room ev'n for studied, for the best and purest Eloquence: It looks too much like Affectation, like shewing Parts and Abilities; or Gifts, as Men call it; when they should be shewing their Humility and Devotion; it is praising themselves instead of praising God Almighty. As the greatest Simplicity of Heart is most absolutely necessary, so the greatest Simplicity of Expression is most proper and suitable; especially in all common Prayers, as are those of a Family. For tho' a Man may be taken with a hard or harsh Expression, because it is his own, yet it startles and shocks another; a

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thing always to be avoided in the Worship of God, especially in our Prayers and Devotions. Now it is certain, there never was, nor well can be, a Form compos'd more easy and intelligible to the meanest Capacities; and yet all so proper, so full of Sense and Piety, as may employ and satisfy the most exalted Understandings. As it is not beneath the highest, so is it neither above the meanest and lowest Apprehensions. And that this is the best way of praying, whatever some may imagine, that one Instance of our Lord's Prayer is an undeniable Demonstration; than which, notwithstanding he had the Spirit without measure, and was Omniscient, yet nothing can be plainer and easier. And I doubt not but our good Reformers, as they follow'd his Example, were guided, and in some measure assisted by the same Spirit: there is nothing in it of Man, or of vain human Wisdom; but all meek and humble, holy and divine.

2dly, AND as the Plainness of those Prayers, so their Brevity is a great Commendation of them, and of very great Advantage. For tho' in all they may take up as much time in repeating, as one long continu'd Prayer; yet the frequent Breaks  
and

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and Pauses, the joining all in our *Amen* at the Close of every Collect, the beginning again afresh with solemn Invocation of God Almighty, makes our Thoughts not so apt to tire, and is a Means to keep up both our Attention and Devotion. We find by our Experience, that in any continu'd Discourse, of what Nature soever, if it consists of too long Periods, our Minds are weary, or are roving; are thinking of something else; and, as it were, diverting and refreshing themselves till it be over. And this is no where more discernible than in Matters of Religion. As the Flesh is here weaker, and the Spirit more unwilling; so the Devil is here stronger, and obstructs and distracts our Attention. And therefore the holy Spirit of God seems on purpose to have given us this Form of Prayer to help our Infirmities. It is true indeed, Mens Thoughts even in this may go astray; but not so likely, not so easily: The frequent Addresses to God Almighty, not by way of vain Repetition, but of most solemn Adoration; the sounding of *Amen* in our Ears at every Prayer or Collect, disturbs even our wandring Thoughts, and recalls 'em to their Duty. And as our Thoughts can scarce wander, so can they less faint and be weary: Every Prayer is a Rest and



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a Relief to the Spirit. And as in our solemn Musick, a short sudden Stop is delightful, and the Silence itself is harmonious; so these Rests in our Prayers are no less affecting, and the Pauses themselves do even raise our Devotion. I shall sum up this Particular, tho' it would bear much more arguing, with a very great and good Authority, that of the excellent Writer of *the Whole Duty of Man*, who before his private Devotions has this short Preface, which give me leave to repeat.

*Christian Reader,*

“ I have for the Help of thy Devoti-  
 “ ons, set down some Forms of private  
 “ Prayer upon several Occasions. If it be  
 “ thought an Omission that there be none  
 “ for Families, I must answer for myself,  
 “ that it was not from an Opinion that  
 “ God is not as well to be worshipp'd in  
 “ the Family as the Church: [*Pray ob-*  
 “ *serve that.*] It was not from an Opi-  
 “ nion, that God is not as well to be wor-  
 “ shipped in the Family as the Church;  
 “ but because (*says he*) the Providence of  
 “ God and the Church hath already fur-  
 “ nish'd thee for that Purpose, infinitely  
 “ beyond what my utmost Care could do:  
 “ I mean the publick Liturgy, or Com-  
 “ mon

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“ mon Prayer; which for all publick Ad-  
 “ dresses to God (and such are Family  
 “ Prayers) are so excellent and useful,  
 “ that we may say of it, as *David* did of  
 “ *Goliath's* Sword, 1 *Sam.* ii. 9. *there is*  
 “ *none like it.* And if this might be  
 said of it then, when perhaps it was a  
 little unweildy, it may much better be  
 said of it now, when by this wise Col-  
 lection it is made more useful and ma-  
 nageable.

H O W E V E R, tho' I have recommended  
 this to you, both because I am afraid Men  
 pretend they know of none, and because  
 I know of none better, yet I do not de-  
 sire to be contentious: If they have any  
 other Form of sound and wholesome Words,  
 and do constantly use them, we are very  
 well satisfied; and what is more, I do not  
 doubt too but they please God Almighty.  
 All we desire is, that the Duty be done;  
 and have the same Sense of praying, as  
*St. Paul* had of preaching, so long as ei-  
 ther way God is worshipped and glorify'd,  
 and daily serv'd in your Families, we re-  
 joyce, and will rejoyce. Tho', to speak  
 like him in another Case, we wish that  
 All would use these; and we think they  
 have the Spirit of God more than any  
 Form of Devotions. However, as I said  
 before,

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before, we have no mind to contend; if any except against this, let them use some other in their Families; for against ever praying at all, I am very sure there is no Exception.

A N D thus I have finish'd this Subject, and am come to the last Thing I promis'd, to make some Application. And would to God I knew but what to say, that might be effectual! Men are satisfied it is their Duty, or they may be, if they will consider; they are sensible of the Benefits of observing it, of the Mischiefs of neglecting it, and the Benefits and Mischiefs both temporal and eternal; they have no Arguments against it, but such as are easily answer'd. And what is it that hinders then? And what is it too that can prevail? If Men are not to be prevail'd upon by all these Considerations?

I F neither the Hope of God's Favour, nor the Fear of his Displeasure, his Blessing, or his Curse, on all their Designs and Endeavours; if neither the Care of their own Souls, nor of those of their Families, for whom they must give account, be not able to persuade Men to live religiously themselves, and to breed up their Families religiously; and there is no more  
likely

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likely Means, than thus constantly worshipping and serving God in their Families: If all this will not do, what can any Man on Earth, (I had almost said) what can an Angel from Heaven think or offer that shall prevail?

AND therefore, instead of farther Arguments (for there is none beyond all this World and the other) I shall apply what has been said, in these two easy Requests: That you would but make a Tryal once, and that you would do it without Delay; and afterward neglect it if you can; I could almost trust it to the Venture, and leave it to your Liberty. You would find so great Benefit, such infinite Comfort, in thus devoutly, Morning and Evening, praying, and praising, and serving God Almighty, that I am confident all the World, all the Businesses, and all the Pleasures of it, would never be able to make you leave it off again. And this is no Reach of Fancy, but such a plain Truth, as many (I am certain) can attest by their happy Experience. And yet they had as many Objections, and labour'd under as many Difficulties; but by the Grace and Blessing of God upon their serious Consideration, they overcame them all, and set in earnest about the Duty, and keep to it,



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it, and persevere in it with inexpressible Satisfaction ; and lay them down in more Peace, and rise again with more Comfort, than they can feel, not only when that of others, but even when their own Corn, and their own Wine and Oil increase.

T H E other Request is, That you would enter upon this Tryal without Delay, before these good Thoughts cool in you, while the Fire is thus kindled, and your Hearts are hot within you, and your Affections warm and glowing. If you let it go out again, and either suffer your worldly Affairs or Pleasures to intervene, before you have put it in Practice ; all this will come to nothing, and either sooner or later will be utterly forgotten. And it were well too, if that were all, if we only lost our Labour, if our Preaching and your Hearing were but in vain, and to no purpose. But, alas ! It is far otherwise. All the pious and good Counsels that are tender'd you from this Place, if they be not observ'd and practis'd, will rise up again in Judgment, and be heard too all distinctly : And tho' you may forget them for the present, you will repeat them all to your selves, and with Sighs, and Sorrow of Heart, will remember them to Eternity.

I shall

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I shall sum up all with a few good Wishes, and tho' they may sound otherwise, yet I am sure they are very good Wishes if they have their Effect: May the good Advice you have heard, go with you, and be with you continually! May it haunt you to your Shops, and may it follow you in your Closets, may it sit with you in your Houses, and may it walk with you when you go abroad; may it be with you when you lie down, and may it be with you when you rise up; may it (like a Ghost, or rather a good Angel) pursue you, trouble you, never leave you or forsake you; may it never let you be at rest or quiet, till you have put it in Practice.

*To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Thanksgiving, and Adoration, now and for ever. Amen.*

S E R-

I shall turn up, I will a few good  
 Willers, and the they may found other-  
 with, and am sure they are very good  
 Willers if they have their Effect: May  
 the good Willers you have heard of with  
 you, and be with you continually: May  
 it bring you to your place, and may it  
 follow you in your Journey, may it with  
 you, your Journey, and may it with  
 with you, and you go forward: may it be  
 with you, and you go forward, and may it  
 be with you, and you go forward, and may it  
 (like a Ghost, or rather a good Angel)  
 protect you, and never leave you  
 or forsake you: may it never let you be  
 at risk of danger, and you have put it in  
 Trust.

To read the Epistle, Gal. 3. 23. and  
 Gal. 3. 23. and Gal. 3. 23. and  
 Gal. 3. 23. and Gal. 3. 23. and  
 Gal. 3. 23. and Gal. 3. 23. and



## SERMON XV.

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### PROVERBS XXIV. 32.

*Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received Instruction.*

**W**HAT it was the wise Man saw, he tells us in the foregoing Verses: *I went by the Field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding: And lo, it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof, and the Stone Wall thereof was broken down: Then I saw, and considered it well, I looked upon it, and received Instruction.*

'T WAS



'TWAS an excellent Saying of an ancient great *Roman*, who left many Sayings behind him too, and wise Proverbs, in Writing, That the Foolish are of great Use and Benefit to the Prudent, but the Prudent of no Advantage or Service to the Foolish. And of this we have before us a remarkable Instance, even *Solomon* himself, the wisest of Men and Princes, instructed by the Folly of some of his own People; yet those People never the better for all the Wisdom of *Solomon*: Not so much as learning how to manage their little Concerns, by observing his managing and improving so great a Kingdom. One would expect, considering their own worldly Disposition, and such an Example as *Solomon*, of most indefatigable Industry, there should not have been a slothful or idle Person in the Nation. And yet we find him reproving such very frequently and severely. 'Tis a Text the Royal Preacher insists upon often; and yet as tho' he were ashamed of them, and thought them unworthy of his Reproofs, he sends them away to the Ant to learn Wisdom and Instruction. Whether what he speaks here, were a thing he had seen and observed, or whether it be only a Parable, or rather both, is not material. 'Tis certainly a true Account

count of the Consequences of Idleness: *I went by the Field, or the Vineyard of the Slothful, and tho' possibly the Soil in it self of as good a Nature as any of the Fields or Vineyards that he could see round about; and tho' they all flourish'd, and were mightily improved; to those who own'd them very profitable, to those who saw them very delightful; yet This, for want of Care, of a little ordinary Pains and Labour, was all cover'd with Thorns, and all over-run with Nettles, both shameful and hurtful; was grown a perfect Wilderness, the Wall of it broken down too, it lay common, as tho' the Possessor had cast off all thought of it, were careless and desperate. Then I saw, says he, and consider'd it well:* He did not pass by like a heedless hasty Traveller, like an idle unconcern'd Spectator; but he saw, and he consider'd; he look'd upon it again, and he wonder'd who was the Owner; it pitied him to see such Waste, such a good Field gone to Ruin; and tho' it was quite barren, yet it yielded him this one Instruction, to go Home, and be more careful than he had ever been of his own Vineyard. *Then I saw and consider'd it well, I look'd upon it, and receiv'd Instruction.* If this be the Effect of Sloth, I will put it into my Litany, and pray every Day, Good Lord deli-

ver me from Idleness. Of which great Sin I intend to discourse at present, and I call it a great Sin, notwithstanding it is so common it is hardly look'd upon as a Sin; yet doubtless, if we measure the Greatness of any Sin as we ought to do, in good Reason, by the Effects and Consequences of it, we shall find it a very great one. For upon the same Account we reckon the Devil the worst Enemy of Mankind, because he tempts to so much Wickedness; upon the very same account we should avoid Idleness, without which even He almost can do nothing. When he comes and finds us virtuously or honestly engaged, he goes his way, as knowing this is none of his Time or Season. He must wait till we are more at leisure, till we have nothing to do, and are idle; and commonly haunts those Souls, as he is said to do those Houses that stand empty. It has been the Opinion of some learned Men, that evil seducing Spirits have their proper peculiar Temptations, according to their Natures and Dispositions; and some incline to This, and some to That, and the other Iniquity: But the Spirit of Sloth and Idleness tempts to all manner of Wickedness, to every kind of Sin, lays us open and defenceless to the Assaults and the Affronts of any insulting Adversary that



that will but take the Advantage of our Weakness and Supineness. It makes us a poor easy Prey even to those Follies and Vanities, which if we had but our Wits about us, we would have defy'd and despis'd. Nay, it not only leaves us unarm'd and unguarded, but, like Fear too, betrays the Succours which Reason affords. We even run into Sin for a Refuge from Idleness; for the Soul of Man is an active, busy, restless Principle; and if it be not well or wisely, will be ill or foolishly employed: It must be doing something, and is so far a sociable Creature, that rather than bear Solitude, it will seek any the worst Company. Of this we had a sad Instance in the great Father of our *Solomon*, who had been safer in the midst of his Enemies, than alone; had better a thousand times been with *Joab* in the Army, had better stood with *Uriah* in the Front of the hottest Battel, had been in a great deal less Danger under the very Walls of *Rabbah*, than walking about idly on those of his Palace at *Jerusalem*. In all his active Life, in his Wars and his Victories, tho' in the Heat of his Youth, he never committed such Folly. The Wife of *Nabal* was fair too, and perhaps as lovely as *Bathsheba*; and what added to her Beauty, of a most courteous Behaviour; and her



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Husband had used him unkindly and ungratefully, had provoked him exceedingly; and tho' he was then strong enough, yet he took her not away, but waited God's Pleasure, and when it was lawful only sought her in Marriage. But here he was betrayed by his Ease and Idleness, that wrought him more Trouble than *Saul* and all the *Philistines*; made him go mourning all the Day long like a Pelican in the Desert; and he could never afterwards look upon that Couch or Bed of Idleness, from which he rose that Evening he saw the fair *Bathsheba*, but he trembled, and threw himself upon it with Anguish, and water'd it with Tears of Sorrow and Repentance. Nay, even this *Solomon*, as we may gather by the History, when his great Work was over, and he had settled the Kingdom in Wealth, Peace, and Plenty, had compleated his Buildings, the holy Temple of God, and his own royal Palace, soon gave himself over to his Ease and his Pleasures, and had scarce finished the House of God, but he fell to Idolatry. Tho' we usually reckon Cares the greatest Misfortunes of Princes, yet the want of them is many times a much greater Unhappiness. And so, proportionably, of other Persons, who, the more they are at Liberty, the more they have  
of

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of Leisure, lye the more open to Temptation. And whoever shall but reflect (of what Rank or Degree soever) on any of his own past Sins and Miscarriages, and consider how it was possible for him to run into such a Folly, to be guilty of such Wickedness, at which he now stands amaz'd, and sighs and weeps bitterly, and abhors himself in Dust and Ashes, will quickly perceive at that Time he was idle; and rather than he had been so, wish he had been set to the worst Slavery, been labouring in the Mines, or tied to an Oar in the Gallies. Think with thy self, O Man! when thou committed'st that Iniquity, what wer't thou then doing, wast thou not very idly disposed, had'st thou not laid aside the Thoughts of thy virtuous or honest Employment? And could'st thou find nothing else to ease, and divert, and refresh thy tired Mind, but Sin and Vanity? Is all the Toil and Labour which thou ever sustain'dst, so irksome and grievous, as the Remembrance of thy Folly? Doth it not weary, and afflict thee, and spend and waste thy Spirits? Doth it not lie heavy on thy Soul, like a dead Weight on thy Conscience? Has it not spoiled all thy Mirth, thy Chearfulness, and thine Innocence; and tho' thou repentest every Day, will it not bring thee to thy Grave

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in Sorrow? And yet notwithstanding we know this to be true by our own Experience, and are sensible which way we have been betray'd into many Temptations; yet I know not how it comes to pass, we are still fond, and desirous, and ambitious of nothing more, than of this very dangerous Condition. And the great End of of all our Pains, and Labour, and Industry, our Carking and Caring, is to come to such an Estate, to such a kind of Life, (and the sooner, we think, the better, if God, in Mercy, do not hinder us) as with the Rich Man in the Gospel, To have nothing to do, to bid our Souls take their Ease and Pleasure: When certainly it were a much greater Favour in God Almighty to thwart our Designs and Endeavours; or if he let us go on and succeed, yet to require our Souls of us, as he did of that Voluptuary, even the same Night he was dreaming of his sensual Enjoyments. We know not what we desire; 'tis a thousand times better and easier, to be placed in such a State as engages us to Pains and Labour. Few Men know the Trouble, the Burthen, the Uneasiness, the Dangers, the Difficulties, of a Life of Ease and Idleness! 'Tis to this we must impute (which I mention not to upbraid or expose 'em, (God knows) but only in Pity  
to



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to their Condition;) but 'tis to This we must impute the lamentable Irregularities, the many sad Enormities of our ancient Cells and Cloysters: For when People had little or no indispenfable Employment, whose Studies were fhort and narrow; whose Learning lay in a fmall Compafs, how natural was it, how almoft unavoidable to human Infirmary, in the midft of fo much Eafe, to fall into divers Temptations? Not that we charge them all, God forbid! no doubt there were many (tho', alas! not fo many as might be wifhed in fo vaft Numbers) that fpent their fpare Hours in their private Prayers and Devotions, in a farther Search and Study both of human and divine Learning; but thefe were very few ftill in refpect of the Generality, who were thought very fair Proficients if they were able to fing an Obiit, or to read a Mafs; which many, alas, underftood no more than the Laity, and minded no more than the Dead too for whom it was performed. We heartily wifh their Faults buried in the Ruins of their Houfes, and the Memory of thofe Things (and more to the Honour of our common Religion) fuppreff'd with their Monafteries.



AND 'tis worth observing to this purpose, that the original Institution of these religious Societies, which began first in *Egypt*, and thence spread over *Judea*, and thence the *Eastern* and *Western* Churches; 'tis very observable, I say, that the primary Institution of this Monastick Kind of Life was in its Nature and Design much another thing, and different from that of later Ages. They were not only more chastly, more soberly, more devoutly, but more reasonably, and more discreetly, both constituted and regulated. As they had their stated Hours for the Service of Religion, for praying and praising God, and reading and hearing the holy Scriptures; so were they also used to work, and were set to constant Day-labour; which was not only in itself a harmless and innocent, but likewise a very profitable and prudent Constitution. The Time that was allow'd 'em from their holy Duties, they employ'd in preparing and bringing in their common Provisions, in looking after their Ground, in planting and dressing their Gardens, the Places as well of their Support as Diversion. By which means they not only maintain'd their Society, but were helpful to the Poor and Needy, the Stranger and Traveller; were an Ease  
and

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and a Relief to the Place where they settled; were neither a Burthen to others, nor (what had been worse) to themselves. And I doubt not to affirm, that this very excellent Design of finding them some Employment, and keeping them from Idleness, was a better Gift and Donation than the profusest Liberality of their After-Great Founders, and most magnificent Benefactors; that called them out of their Desarts into populous Cities, and changed their poor Cells into rich and stately Palaces; and have destroyed more Souls too with Ease and Idleness, even of the Priests themselves, than they saved with their Masses. I confess indeed there are some amongst them, especially of one Order, that cannot justly or directly be charged with the Sin of Idleness; that have (God forgive 'em, if God will forgive such Wickedness) with their restless Intrigues put the World in an uproar, and are the secret Springs and Wheels of the greatest Actions in *Christendom*. And yet even all this too is plainly the Effect of Idleness; the Neglect of their proper Business, the Duties of their own Profession: If they spent their Time and Study in the Religion of the Holy Jesus, which is both pure and peaceable, the Christian World had never been corrupted with their Morals, nor almost ruin'd with their Politicks.

BUT

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BUT besides the many Evils to which Men are tempted through Idleness, Idleness itself is none of the least, though it tempted to no Iniquity, were there nothing in it but the Loss of Time. Time, that inestimable Treasure. Time, that like Health, which those who have do little regard, and only those who want it, know how to prize and value. Time, that like Wealth, which those who have do squander away, and few know the Use of it, but such as are in Necessity. Time, that like Liberty, which the Free do scarce consider, and none know the Worth of it but Prisoners and Captives. Our Health, our Wealth, our Liberty, our Life itself; which, like the rest, we never esteem, till we find it just a going: then, like the wretched Prodigal, we reflect on the fair Inheritance allowed us by our kind Father, which we had lavish'd away so idly; see nothing left us but dry Husks, in which we can find no Relish, can very hardly taste, can very heavily digest; and yet even those Husks too deny'd us in our Extremity. What would we then give for the very smallest Pittance out of our own vast Estate? How would it now support us? How would it maintain us comfortably? How happily could we live upon it? We could live upon it for ever!

THE



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THE Philosopher speaking to a very aged Person, whom he supposes (for Discourse sake) to be a hundred Years old or upward, desires him to consider with himself, and to think again seriously, whether tho' he were so, he were not deceived in his Computation, and whether it were not on his Side yet a greater Supposition.

“ Think with thyself (says he) how much  
 “ Time thou hast spent impertinently,  
 “ how much thou hast spent idly, and to  
 “ no manner of purpose; how many Days  
 “ hast thou lived as thou should'st, and  
 “ did'st design; how many virtuous good  
 “ Deeds hast thou done worth the remem-  
 “ bring; how much Time hast thou lost  
 “ in vain Grief, and fruitless Sorrow; how  
 “ much in vainer Mirth, and how much  
 “ in as fruitless Jollity? Cast it all toge-  
 “ ther now, and see if thou art not mista-  
 “ ken: Call'st thou this a hundred Years?  
 “ Thou hast not lived half thy Life-time!  
 “ Thou hast not seen so many good Days!  
 “ And whenever thou dyest too, thou  
 “ wilt find thou dyest untimely: *Senties*  
 “ *immaturum te mori*. Thou thinkest thy  
 “ self ripe Fruit, ready to drop of thine  
 “ own accord; alas, thou art but green  
 “ yet, and art not fit to be gather'd. So  
 much Work have we to do, of so great  
 Concern, and great Difficulty; so many  
 Sins to confess, to bewail and deprecate;



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so many Virtues to acquire, to improve, to perfect; that sure none, not the best, can have any Time to be idle; any more spare Hours, than others (alas) have spare Minutes. And these, it is to be fear'd too, are much the greater Number: and certainly they cannot do better or wiser, than with the Widow in the Gospel, to throw their poor Mite into the Treasury, to give up all they are worth in the World, to devote all that is left 'em, to the Service of God Almighty. And he is so good a God, so merciful, so bountiful, that he will even accept and reward their poor Offerings. *Tho' all the day long they have stood idle in the market*, not that they were not hired, for they were called and invited continually, and they saw others go in before 'em, and accept the Invitation, whilst they rather chose to stay out idling and loitering; yet if at the eleventh Hour they enter into the Vineyard, they shall not fail of their Hire: Nor shall those who went in first envy or murmur, but be glad to see them so well rewarded. But to keep out till the twelfth Hour, till even *the Lord of the Vineyard is just coming to reckon with the Servants and Labourers*, to pay them all what he agreed with 'em, is sure somewhat of the latest; and he that can appear amongst 'em, had need of good Assurance, especially if he hope to be

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be paid amongst 'em, when he never work'd or labour'd; and only when the Market was over, and he had done all his other Business, and was just going out of the World, by the way stept into the Vineyard. And yet this is the Case and Danger of him that delays and loiters, and knows not but his twelfth Hour may be the next Moment; and then what would he give for some of that excellent Time and Leisure, which he knew not once what to do withal? which he spent either in useless, in idle, or ill Company? or for some of those good Hours which he spent in fierce talking and disputing about Religion; nay, for some of those precious Hours,—which he spent even in the House and in the Service of God Almighty? How much better would he spend 'em now? With how much a great deal more Devotion? How would he pray more humbly? How would he praise God more heartily? How would he hearken to good Advice more candidly and more attentively, and go home, and by the Grace of God put it immediately into Practice? This he will do when it is too late, and when he has lost the Opportunity; and why will he not, when he has it? Why does he fool and trifle away those Hours,  
which

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which he knows he shall at last regret most heavily; and had he 'em all again, would not part with 'em for an Empire?

T H E R E is one thing very obvious here I should insert by way of Caution; and yet I know not how, I am almost afraid to mention, and had rather that what has been said should be thought to be defective, for fear of the ill Influence it may have upon some People: for alas, they have gotten a way by the help of any one Caution, to evade and elude all the rest of a Discourse. But because it is so natural, they will soon think of it themselves, and so make worse Use of it than perhaps they may do otherwise; I shall fairly state it, and it is this: That when we speak against Idleness, we do not think the Time is lost that is not spent in the Church, or the Closet; that Men should be always on their Knees, at their Prayers and Devotions; that they should immure and sequester themselves from human Society; which besides that it is a Life the most uneasy and uncomfortable, it is apt to make Men worse, proud, peevish and censorious: nor yet that they should think the Time spent in their Employment is vain and idle; it is both Duty and Necessity, and in its  
Kind



Kind and at a Distance a serving of God Almighty: nor yet that they should think so of the Time spent in Recreation, on Condition it be innocent, decent, and moderate; no, nor yet that they should think they even spend their Time idly in agreeable, useful, and virtuous Conversation, where they may exercise and improve many good Qualities; Gentleness, Courtesy, Meekness, Humility. All this in fit Season and due Circumstances is allowed; nor can any of it justly or directly be charged with Idleness.

AND yet, tho' I have thus warily laid down this Caution, I almost wish I could take it up again, or had even let it alone. For how easily will many People with this one Concession, defend and excuse themselves in all manner of Idleness? They may trade, they may study, they may converse, they may recreate, they may and must attend their private and publick Occasions, and so have no more Time to be idle, than they have to be good or religious: Because they need not be always on their Knees, will be very seldom; because they need not turn Anchorets, will never be out of Company.

THUS





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THUS, it is to be fear'd, Men will abuse their just Liberty! And if they will too, who can help it? for in this Sense even Liberty is like the Law, wise, just, and good; and those only to blame that transgress either. Yet one thing I shall add, That notwithstanding all this Liberty, he that trades, that studies, that converses, that recreates, and neglects the main Chance, that Chance which should make him tremble; that Chance, which he shall have but once; 'tis for his Life, for Eternity; that has not made sure what he can of his Salvation; that is not at Peace with himself and God Almighty; let him be doing what he will, never so hard or well employ'd, he is the idlest, the laziest, the slothfullest Man alive. There is not a worse Sluggard to be met with in all *Solomon*: *He folds his Arms to rest*, and all his very Pains and Labour to divert the Thoughts of his present and future Condition, is only *a little more sleep, and a little more slumber.*

BUT because in this World we are so hurry'd and distracted, we can scarce judge of things aright, and do often change our  
Opinion,

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Opinion, there are two Seasons especially apt to make us wise and serious, to fix and settle our Judgments, Death and Calamity: Both which I shall briefly consider, and so conclude.

'Tis certain when we come to die (if we believe those who have gone before, and have heard their sad Complaints, or if we believe our selves when we have been going) we shall then look upon Time as of all Things the most valuable; would have it on any Terms, were it possible to be purchased, with all the Honour we had gain'd, with all the Riches we had gather'd; would give our Credit for Disgrace, our Pleasures for Afflictions, our Abundance for Poverty; would submit to any Conditions, would even be glad to live poor, and wretched, and contemptible; and all for a little of that Time which when we had so very plentifully, we threw away with both Hands, and gave some of it to that Folly, and bestowed some on that Vanity; so strangely free and liberal, to give to every Vice that ask'd us, to any the next Comer, as tho' we thought there were no End of it, and it would have held out for ever! Then we shall see our Folly, we shall perceive

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it while we are dying, and after we are dead, shall be infinitely more sensible.

AND not only Death itself, but the very Fear and Apprehension, the Danger of it in any sudden surprizing Calamity, will teach us how to value Time, or rather to find it is inestimable ! And this Lesson God of late has been teaching us more especially, and which surely Men cannot already, and I think should never forget ; should never forget the Vows, the Promises, and Resolutions, which they made to God in their Troubles, and in the Days of their Distress ; should never forget their Wishes that they had spent their Time better ! should never forget their Prayers that God would save them from their Enemies, that they might only serve him in Righteousness and true Holiness. And God seems to have heard their Desires, to have given them, if not Deliverance, yet a Respite from their Fears ; and how shamefully inexcusable, how miserable will they be, neither pardon'd nor yet pitied, if they improve not the Opportunity, if they make not good use of the Time, if they repent not as they design'd, as they declared, and as they promised, and serve God better than ever ; which may lengthen out his Mercy too, may happily improve their  
their

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their Respite and their Reprieve into perfect Deliverance. But whatever God (whose Counsels are unsearchable) has decreed, to be spending our Time well, is yet the best Preparation; the only way to qualify us either for Mercy or for Judgment; to bear Judgment here, and to avoid it hereafter; to relish or enjoy even the Mercy of God Almighty; to find any Comfort in it here, or to have any Hopes of it hereafter.

*May we consider what has been said,  
and God give us a right Understanding  
in all Things. Amen.*

F I N I S.





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